



ProWMS with Voice Picking Deployed by Gordons Chemists to Deliver Improved Warehouse Performance and Stock Accuracy

Gordons Chemists is Northern Ireland's largest independent pharmacy chain, with over 60 stores in high streets and shopping centres across Northern Ireland and Scotland. The company was founded by brothers Neil and Robert Gordon in 1980 in Donaghadee, County Down, Ireland.

Gordons Chemists sells thousands of products, both in-store, and online via the Gordons Direct channel, including fragrances, skincare and make-up, healthcare products, hair styling products, electrical goods and prescription medicines. All items are receipted, stored, picked and despatched from a warehouse in Banbridge, County Down, Northern Ireland.



Gordons Chemists
Banbridge,
Northern Ireland

THE SITUATION

- The fundamental challenge to business systems was to keep track of the thousands of items being received, stored, and shipped through Gordons' facility.
- The previous system was a paper-based picking system, which meant inaccuracies in picks could not be measured.
- The challenge was to improve on-shelf availability and stock visibility throughout the process.
- Given the complex nature of the products being picked – single items, cases, multi-packs etc. – there were too many totes and cages being underutilised.
- The size and dimensions of every receipted item is measured and weighed to ensure the maximum capacity of outbound totes measured in litres, and cages measured in both volume and weight.
- Files had to be pre-processed, forming a need for certain assignments to be created for each picker.



THE SOLUTION

Each of the 60 Gordons Chemists stores has a dedicated EPOS system. Orders are relayed in real-time back to ProWMS at the Banbridge HQ and held in a pre-order processing phase.

Gordons Chemists use Microsoft Dynamics NAV as their ERP solution to which ProWMS Warehouse Management Software is fully interfaced via web services.

Given the volumes and varied nature of the products being picked, Principal Logistics Technologies recommended voice technology where pickers are voice-enabled keeping an operator's hands free and allowing them to focus more on the task at hand.



"Multiple business-critical challenges needed to be addressed. Thousands of daily orders received from the 60 stores required collating and a large volume of pre-processing algorithms needed performing prior to release as voice picking instructions. Certain products, and, or, quantities could be released for immediate picking. Other orders or products needed to be held and grouped by route, etc. based on a set of optimised rules."

Joe O'Shea, Principal Logistics Technologies

Promotional stock held in the warehouse needed to be issued to stores by certain dates. Processes had to be run automatically in order to release the stock for picking so it would be merged with the regular store orders on the correct dates.

Logic also needed to be applied to certain products classes (e.g.: perfumes at Christmas time) as individual shop managers had a tendency to over-order. There would then only be a limited quantity of available stock, so ProWMS rules were established to ensure the best spread of stock across all stores while ensuring that flagship stores were prioritised before order processing.

At goods-in, purchase orders are received via MS Dynamics NA and handheld terminals (HHT's) were deployed for this function. As products are being received it is common within the industry that pack sizes change (special offers e.g.: 2-for-1, larger pack size etc.). And this can occur without the buyers' knowledge.

Principal Logistics Technologies implemented a process that would capture these changes, quarantine the product and alert the purchasing teams - all with a few keystrokes on the HHT's. It was also made mandatory that operators capture the dimensions and weight to optimise the picking and capacity of totes and cages.

Honeywell

Honeywell Voice



RESULTS SUMMARY

- An order processing system that forces promotional stock into shops
- Operators presented with the optimised next line item
- ProWMS Voice operates in real-time for complete stock accuracy and maximum picking efficiency
- A minimum 25% improvement in pick accuracy rates



On the picking side, orders are broken into a number of zones e.g. Drugs, Perfumes, Retail. Orders can be picked directly into totes or into cages. (All totes will eventually end up in a cage). ProWMS instructs the operator in real-time, as to the pick location, and then about the items to be picked.

The real-time nature of this process enables us to implement perpetual stock counts on balances remaining in the pickface. As stock is only allocated when the picker presents themselves, this means there is full traceability of batch numbers and best before dates, etc. through pickfaces.

Another key requirement for Gordons Chemists was capacity management of totes and cages. ProWMS, prior to releasing orders, calculates and optimises the volumetric and weight constraints of each tote and cage.

Online ordering is a high growth area for Gordons Chemists via its Gordons Direct channel and ProWMS is interfaced to online web orders, and also manages picking of these items.

"Gordon's presented a myriad of challenges for us due to the size of the facility, the high volumes and level of stock within the facility, and the complexity of the products that needed to be managed. However, we welcomed the challenge to provide a comprehensive retail management support system. Considerable hard work and detail went into it, but it was really quite satisfying to see a high-level solution meeting the customer's expectations."

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.