

REWE DORTMUND ADOPTS LYDIA VOICE

REWE Dortmund is harnessing the power of LYDIA Voice to meet its order picking needs at its new fresh produce centre. Supplied by EPG (Ehrhardt Partner Group), the supermarket firm was impressed by the pick-by-voice solution's extremely reliable voice recognition capabilities – even for staff with strong accents. Coupled with easy-to-use hardware, the tool ensures a high level of satisfaction for staff and management alike, resulting in a 10 percent uplift in picking performance for fruit and vegetables. REWE Dortmund has already been deploying pick-by-voice in other parts of its warehouse. The introduction of LYDIA Voice now means that two voice systems are being used in parallel.

REWE Dortmund has been utilising a voice-based solution to meet its warehouse picking needs for 14 years, with the company above all valuing the lower error rates and higher productivity achieved when compared with other technologies. Pick-by-voice solutions tell pickers where the next item is located, and the quantity needed, via their headset. This eliminates the need for paper- or tablet-based lists. That's why REWE Dortmund wanted to deploy a voice solution in its new fresh produce centre, too. However, it opted to use a different tool to the one already in operation. "We pursue a twosupplier strategy to minimise risks and to allow us to participate in new developments more effectively. That's why we wanted to look for a second system," explains Stefan Hahn, Head of the Supply Chain Management department and authorized signatory at REWE Dortmund. "When choosing between the various systems on offer, seamless voice recognition was high on our list of priorities. Unlike the existing system, we wanted the new one to work without voice training. We were also looking for a regional provider to ensure greater accessibility in the event of service calls."

VOICE RECOGNITION POWERED BY AI TECHNOLOGY

During testing, the EPG voice system stood out by offering reliable voice recognition based on neural networks and deep learning. One of the related benefits in that respect is the system's speaker-independent design, which eliminates the need for voice template training. This means staff are able to get to work right away, significantly reducing the time needed for onboarding.

TWO VOICE SYSTEMS RUNNING IN PARALLEL

The company began integrating LYDIA Voice into the 15,000m² fruit and vegetables section of its fresh produce centre in 2021. It is home to around 4,100 pallet spaces that are used to store 800 different types of fruit and vegetable products and baked goods before they make their way to the 380 REWE stores in the area. Around 70 members of staff work in that part of the facility, picking between 50,000 and 110,000 items a day. The existing system remains in operation in other parts of the fresh produce centre and at other warehousing sites. "Running the two voice systems in parallel worked flawlessly from day one," explains Torsten Isenhardt, Expert Project Manager LYDIA Voice at EPG. "They are directly connected to the warehouse management system via the same interface. That system controls all warehousing processes, including the pick-by-voice dialogue. Our team reconfigured LYDIA Voice to ensure pickers' day-to-day work changed as little as possible, allowing them to continue using the same commands as before."

EASY OPERATION KEY FOR EMPLOYEE SATISFACTION

Workers didn't need long to get to grips with the new system. That was mainly thanks to the reliable voice recognition as well as the user-friendly design of the mobile voice computer, emphasises Christian Peters, team lead for fruit and vegetable picking at REWE Dortmund: "LYDIA Voice is intuitive to use and is 100% voice-controlled. Using the headset, all settings such as volume and speed can be altered by voice command. Logging on is simple and the menu is easy to navigate." Voice control also makes the devices last longer, he says, with button controlled devices being more susceptible to becoming faulty. Isenhardt confirms that good technologies are key for employee satisfaction. "Studies show that staff are more likely to stick with an employer if they are able to work with technologies that they enjoy using. Especially in the field of logistics, where there are staff shortages and high turnover rates, it is therefore important to make work as enjoyable as possible." Another benefit over other voice solutions is the system's open design, says Stefan Hahn. "The LYDIA Voice team provides a lot of insight into the technology. For example, our IT team are able to set up new devices themselves." There has therefore been hardly any need to contact support, he explains.

10 PERCENT INCREASE IN PICKING PERFORMANCE

The system has been extremely stable since its integration, and picking performance in the fruit and vegetables segment has increased by 10 percent. The error rate has also

improved significantly. Hahn is more than happy with the boost to process efficiency. “The system met our expectations completely. The integration was smooth, and our working relationship with the LYDIA Voice team is also built on a great deal of trust.”

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