

What's in a Box?

ROSSMANN's Smart Operations Powered by LYDIA Voice

With an innovative in-house development, the drugstore chain ROSSMANN is optimizing its order picking processes. In collaboration with EPG (Ehrhardt Partner Group), the company has implemented the WIIEB control system. This system uses an intelligent algorithm to calculate the optimal distribution of items within rolling containers, based on parameters such as product size, weight, and contents. Employees receive picking instructions via Put-to-Light displays and the voice-directed solution LYDIA Voice. The WIIEB system ensures full transparency by showing exactly which items are placed in which container. This not only helps optimize loading but also facilitates clear labeling, especially important for hazardous materials transport.

"What's in a rolling container?" It's a seemingly simple question, yet one that often goes unanswered in the day-to-day reality of order picking. When loading rolling carts, employees typically have broad discretion and decide on their own how to distribute items across containers. As a result, rolling containers are often unevenly loaded, with some even exceeding their maximum allowable weight. ROSSMANN faced this exact challenge. In its eight regional distribution centers, the company assembles around 1,300 shipments for its stores each day. Time and again, completed rolling containers turned out to be too heavy for shipment. Reducing the number of products per box wasn't a viable option, as stores depend on the full availability of goods. Cutting down on container volume would have inevitably led to more shipments, more miles traveled, and higher logistics costs.

The task for ROSSMANN's logistics team was therefore to distribute the weight more evenly across the roll cages and make optimal use of the available volume. They were seeking a solution that would precisely control the loading process while providing full transparency: at any time, it had to be clear which items were in which box, an aspect that is particularly crucial when hazardous goods need to be labeled.

A complex interplay of hardware and software was required to meet the demands, as no off-the-shelf solution available on the market matched ROSSMANN's specific needs. As a result, the company decided to develop a dedicated system in-house.

Smart Control for Efficient Order Picking – The WIIEB System

WIIEB, short for “Was ist in einer Box” in German (“What is in a box”), combines three core technologies: Pick-by-Voice, Put-to-Light, and intelligent control software. Using a headset, the picker receives clear voice instructions about which items to pick, from which storage location, and in what quantity. Thanks to Pick-by-Voice, the worker always has both hands free, eliminating the need for paper lists or handheld scanners. This enables focused, ergonomic, and accurate work.

At the same time, the intelligent allocation of items ensures that available storage space is used to its full potential: empty gaps in the boxes are minimized, and loading volume is efficiently utilized. Given that ROSSMANN's eight warehouses ship around 25,800 roll boxes per day to retail stores, this optimization delivers a substantial benefit: less overpacking, improved space utilization, and lower transport costs.

“The WIIEB process is ushering in a new era of order picking for us,” says Hendrik van Duuren, General Manager Logistics at ROSSMANN. “Thanks to the new system, we always know exactly what’s in each roll box. That’s a milestone for ROSSMANN logistics, bringing us a wide range of benefits. Weight distribution is optimized, making the boxes easier to handle, reducing damage caused by incorrect loading, and enabling better truck capacity utilization. It also helps us meet legal requirements more easily.”

LYDIA Voice as the Central Element of the Solution

At the heart of the new system is EPG's powerful pick-by-voice technology, LYDIA Voice. It forms the foundation for voice-directed order picking and enables intuitive, ergonomic, and safe operation, even under demanding warehouse conditions. Thanks to its AI-based speech recognition, LYDIA Voice works right out of the box without the need for voice training, and it flexibly adapts to different speakers, dialects, and background noise. For ROSSMANN, this means high process reliability with minimal training effort. The

deep integration of LYDIA Voice into the WIEB system allows seamless communication between people, systems, and vehicles. Voice instructions guide pickers confidently through every process step, from picking items to placing them in the correct loading position, supported by visual feedback via put-to-light. This ensures every movement is precisely controlled and documented. As a result, LYDIA Voice's proven technology is not only a driver of efficiency gains but also a key factor in ensuring transparency, reducing errors, and improving ergonomics in day-to-day operations.

Today, ROSSMANN operates with 800 WIEB-enabled industrial trucks equipped with Put-to-Light modules and approximately 1,000 VOXTER voice computers. The most recent site to implement the system was the state-of-the-art logistics center in Burgwedel, completing the rollout across the company's network.

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EPG – Smarter Connected Logistics

EPG is a leading international provider of a comprehensive supply chain execution suite (EPG ONE™) and employs 1000+ people in 23 locations across the globe. The group of companies offers its more than 1,600 customers WMS, WCS, WFM, TMS and voice solutions for optimizing logistics processes – from manual to fully automated logistics environments. EPG's solutions cover the entire supply chain: from warehouse and road to ground and cargo handling solutions at airports. Logistics consulting, cloud services, managed services and logistics training in the company's own academy round off EPG's comprehensive range of solutions.

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