

Automated Dispatching System

Essex – United Kingdom



Picking/Shipping Errors Reduced

- ü High picking efficiency
- ü Automatic product/customer identification
- ü Eliminates dispatch/shipping errors
- ü 1400 cartons handled per hour
- ü Reduced staffing requirements
- ü Accurate picking/shipping records
- ü Unique carton identification



Case Study

PMS International supply household goods and soft toys to a huge cross section of UK outlets.

In order to cope with fluctuations imposed by customers and lower operational costs, Director Neil Beverly needed to improve picking performance.

Like many distribution companies PMS employed a paper based picking system, where pickers would collect picking requests on a customer basis, potentially causing them to visit a picking location multiple times, introducing inefficiencies due to the vastness of the warehouse picking areas.

Axiom arrived at a solution which would allow PMS to wave pick, reducing the amount of walking time and lowering the number of locations visited during a day.

PMS laid down criteria of automatically conveying, scanning, printing a shipping label and merging onto a carousel. The throughput was set at 1400 cartons per hour. Axiom worked with PMS's IT department and provided the conveyor control software, print and apply labelling machines, bespoke online labelling and control software, offline re-work software and stations.

Axiom interfaced the complete system with PMS's Unisys server and legacy Cobol based system, utilising Unix based file handling interfaces. PMS's system automatically sends data updates whenever a picker in the warehouse 'gets work'; this data is incorporated in real time with current data held on Axiom's system. As cartons are scanned the system looks up for matching carton/customer information and generates the shipping label; typically this happens in the blink of an eye. The labels are applied and checked at the labelling stations.

Some cartons are not suitable for system handling and are taken directly to the rework station where they are manually scanned and labels are produced. Users can also manually enter product data for cartons that do not have barcodes.

A natural extension to the system was added to enhance dispatch. Cartons would normally be loaded onto dispatching trucks relaying on manual checks to ensure that delivered cartons were correct. Rising customer complaints and returns levels meant PMS needed a dispatch solution. Once again, Neil Beverly worked with Axiom to solve the problem. A portable solution allowing for a mobile omni-scanner and PC work station able to be wheeled to any dispatch bay door. Connecting the PC to the network allows the dispatch team to load cartons in the correct route drop order with confidence that the loaded cartons are correct for the customers' deliveries. Axiom supplied three mobile omni-scanning stations and three manual stations.