

P M S Integrated software solution eliminates costly distribution errors



PMS International Group, one of the UK's leading suppliers of household goods and soft toys to retailers, has implemented an integrated software system from Axiom to control the picking, sorting and checking of orders prior to despatch at its Basildon distribution centre in Essex. The new software is aimed to improve the efficiency and accuracy of despatch operations, cutting costs and enhancing customer service.

Prior to the introduction of the Axiom system, PMS had relied upon a paper-based order picking system involving operators collecting items from storage on a customer-by-customer basis. This, traditional system of order picking meant that operation would often repeatedly visit the same picking location many times during a shift. The extensive size of the storage area within the Basildon facility meant that operators had to walk considerable distances to visit these locations, further compromising efficiency.

In order to solve these problems, a revised order processing system was introduced to facilitate more efficient 'wave' picking of goods. By automatically breaking down order components, the system creates a constantly updated list of items that are being picked, while maintaining the integrity of individual orders.

Once items have been manually picked and transferred to a conveyor system, the Axiom software controls their automatic sorting, bespoke labelling, scanning, checking and distribution. Interfaced with a Unisys server and legacy Cogo/Unix system, the software is capable of processing up to 1,400 cartons per hour. As picked items along a conveyor linking the storage area to a carousel in the goods out section, scanners check that the products within the cartons match customer requirements. Labels are then automatically applied by integrated Axiom print and apply labelling machines.

The final stage of the distribution operation is also monitored by the Axiom software. Five mobile scanner/PC workstations supplied by Axiom, three of which incorporate overhead scanners, promote the fast and efficient checking and loading of goods onto delivery vehicles. Each portable unit can be wheeled to one of a series of loading bays within the goods out section.

The workstations are easily interlocked to the boom loader serving the loading bay to establish a computer interface. These mobile scanners confirm order

details and control the loading of cartons in the correct route drop order as automatically designated by the Axiom control system.

Neil Beverley, Operations Director, PMS International Group, says “The Axiom system checks that the correct goods are loaded onto vehicles in the right order for delivery. By significantly improving accuracy, the Axiom system has provided massive cost savings and also helped improve satisfaction for our customers.”