



Lydia[®]
LOGISTICS

Bartlett Brews Up Success With Lydia[®] Voice

Dairy distributor dramatically improves productivity and accuracy.

When Starbuck's was looking for a dairy distributor in the New York City metro area, it found the perfect partner with Bartlett Dairy, a 50-year-old family-run business, which guarantees next day delivery to most orders in the tri-state area.

Bartlett is the largest distributor of fresh milk in the Northeast, serving retailers throughout New Jersey, New York, Connecticut and Pennsylvania. But the distributor's biggest customer is Starbucks. Bartlett is the exclusive tri-state distributor to some 500 Starbucks stores. And while Bartlett always met Starbucks strict quality demands, there was room for improvement. In 2012 the distributor evaluated its picking

operations and decided to move from a paper-based system to a pick-by-voice solution. "Within weeks of implementation, our workers went from an average of 450 picks to 800 picks per hour," says Josh Kanis, Bartlett's director of information technology. "The voice solution boosted picking productivity by 40 percent. To say that we exceeded our expectations is putting it mildly."

The voice solution was installed in a warehouse that Bartlett bought in Newark, NJ, in December 2012. Bartlett and Starbucks worked together to update the 105,000-square-foot facility and added refrigerated and freezer areas.



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Josh Kanis, Director IT

topVOX[®]
VOICE SOLUTIONS



Customer Profile

Customer:
Bartlett Distribution Services L.L.

Branch:
Dairy distributor

Location:
NEWARK, NJ

Application:
Picking

Results:
/ 40% productivity increase
/ Reduction in errors
/ Increased safety

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With the new facility up and running, Kanis focused on improving operations, starting with order picking. The warehouse handles 80 to 100 high-volume SKUs each day, which are received in the morning and then shipped to Starbucks stores in the evening. At that time, the order pickers were using clipboards, averaging about 450 picks per hour. "Our pickers were very fast and our goal was to get them up to 475 picks per hour – I didn't think it was humanly possible to go any faster," says Kanis. "Plus, they were fairly accurate – we didn't have many mispicks, so initially we were wondering if we would really see an ROI."

The company met with a number of vendors and chose the Lydia[®] voice solution from topVOX Corp., Barrington, IL. Lydia[®] works by directing order pickers throughout the picking process by voice commands and checks.

"A big reason we chose topVOX is that they were the only vendor that would do a pilot with us," says Kanis. "They took the time to evaluate our operations and answer our questions. Within a couple of days I was sold – I liked the safety features, the reporting capabilities and the fact that employees could be fully trained in just a few days." Within weeks of installing topVOX, the workers were averaging 800 picks per hour, with the fastest going as high as 1,200. "We knew the system was working well because we actually started to finish two hours earlier each day," Kanis says. "So we reduced the number of pickers, down from 18 to 12, and reorganized

some of the workers into other areas of the warehouse. We realized we were going to have an ROI in a very short time."

Bartlett's picking operation is divided into two areas – the "pastry" side handles refrigerated and frozen pastry items, and the "paper" side handles cases of paper products, such as cups and napkins, as well as high service SKUs, such as cases of Water, Espresso, and Syrups. "When we implemented topVOX, we didn't want to change anything in our pick area – change is very disruptive and we wanted to avoid that at all costs," says Kanis. "The only thing that changed was that our employees were now wearing a headset, instead of using a clipboard."

On the pastry side, items are unloaded and staged in three large aisles. These items include baked goods, cakes, muffins, and fresh bananas products typically found in a Starbucks café. There, pickers go up and down the aisle, directed by topVOX's Lydia[®], selecting items and loading them into trays for each store. The crates are stacked, and as each order is filled, the system generates a store label, which is attached to the stack, and then moved to the loading dock. On the paper side, the pickers select the cases by store directed by Lydia[®], stacking the boxes onto crates, which are shrink wrapped and moved to the loading dock. The pastry orders and paper orders are then combined to be sent to the store. Another advantage of the topVOX system is can keep track of the picking process in real time. Bartlett

has installed a large computer screen in the center of the warehouse so that workers can see how they're doing individually in terms of picks per hour, as well as the group's overall picking progress for the day.

"Our employees love being able to see their progress – it's created positive competition among them," says Kanis. "They're always trying to beat their best time. Although some of Bartlett's order pickers speak Spanish, the company elected to use only English words. "We've kept our commands very simple and the system is really good at recognizing the workers responses – even with their accents," says Kanis.

Although the topVOX solution can be used in any type of hardware, Bartlett chose the Vortex[®] devices because of their ruggedness. "I found the Vortexers to be very durable, but if we do decide to expand down the line and use different hardware, topVOX will be able to support it," says Kanis.

In addition to the huge gains in productivity, Bartlett has also experienced a significant increase in accuracy. "We were accurate before using the system, but when we do audits now, we rarely find a mistake," says Kanis. Bartlett plans to expand the topVOX system for use in inventory and putaway applications. "Our employees keep coming up with suggestions as to where we can use the system next. There are so many opportunities for voice – it was one of the best investments we've ever made," says Kanis.

topVOX[®]
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