Axiom’s automated software solution provides cost savings at PMS

Axiom GB has designed and integrated a new software system to control the picking, sorting and checking of orders at PMS International, one of the UK’s leading suppliers of household goods and soft toys to the retail trade. The new software has improved the efficiency and accuracy of despatch operations, cutting costs and enhancing customer service.

Historically the pickers at PMS operated a traditional paper based picking system, with operators collecting orders on a customer-by-customer basis. There were a number of factors, however, that made this system inefficient: The picking areas in the PMS warehouse are vast and therefore operators had to walk considerable distances to visit a picking location. In addition, the picking staff often had to return to the same location several times in a shift.

“By significantly improving accuracy, the system has provided massive cost savings and also helped to improve satisfaction for our customers.”

Neil Beverley
Operations Director
PMS International Group

Taking responsibility for your warehouse systems
Reducing operational costs by ‘wave’ picking

Neil Beverley, Operations Director of the PMS International Group, was tasked with lowering the operational costs of the business by improving picking performance. His choice of partner was Axiom GB, with its solution to the problem - a new order processing system which introduced ‘wave’ picking of goods.

The Axiom system automatically breaks down order components, constantly updating the list of items that are being picked, whilst maintaining the integrity of individual orders. By operating in this way the amount of walking time for operators is reduced and the number of locations visited during a shift is lowered.

Once the items have been manually picked they are transferred to a conveyor system where the Axiom software controls their automatic conveying, sorting, bespoke labelling, scanning, checking and distribution. The throughput of cartons on the automated system is set at 1,400 per hour.

Axiom interfaced the complete system with PMS’s Unisys service and legacy Cobol based system. As the operators begin picking the PMS system sends data updates which are incorporated in real time with the current data held on Axiom’s system. The picked items are scanned and checked to ensure they correspond with matching carton and customer information. Labels are automatically generated and applied by Axiom print and labelling machines.

Improving accuracy at dispatch

Neil Beverly also worked with Axiom to solve a problem that PMS was experiencing with their dispatch method. In the past, the company had been relying on manual checks to ensure that delivered cartons were correct. This led to rising customer complaints and increasing returns levels.

The solution was provided by Axiom in the form of mobile scanners/PC workstations, which can be wheeled to the series of loading bays in the dispatch area. Once the PC is connected to the network the cartons are scanned and order details are checked, eliminating costly errors. The Axiom control system then automatically controls the loading of cartons in the correct route drop order, to improve the accuracy of the dispatch operation.

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

Key benefits

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