



# Lucas Warehouse Optimization Suite ensures access to life saving medications



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Direct Relief is a humanitarian aid organization, headquartered in Santa Barbara, California and active in all 50 states and more than 80 countries. Their mission is to improve the health and lives of people affected by poverty or emergencies – without regard to politics, religion, or ability to pay. The organization was founded in 1948 to send medical equipment back to Europe to assist in rebuilding medical capabilities after World War II, and to this day provides medical and pharmaceutical assistance to organizations across the United States and throughout the world.

Direct Relief receives no government funding, relying exclusively on private funding, and as such has always sought to maintain full accountability to its benefactors. Direct Relief is also required to adhere to the strict guidelines of the Drug Supply Chain Security Act (DSCSA), which establishes national standards for securing the United States prescription drug channel from the manufacturer all the way to the dispenser. Because of their unique situation, they faced numerous and repeated audits, and as they grew, they needed solutions that would provide the efficiencies and scalability of all major pharmaceutical and medical supply distribution centers, while also being cost effective.

## “Life-changing” picking accuracy

As they prepared to add a 5th warehouse to their primary operation (they are now in a new state-of-the-art distribution center in Santa Barbara), the organization was looking for something that integrated with SAP, and offered better work management and reporting, while meeting all the verification requirements and guidelines necessary. They also needed a solution that could provide timely updates to their inventory system and provide a shipping/packing solution. After some preliminary research, they reached out to Lucas Systems.



**20%**  
increase in  
picking accuracy

Working closely together, the Direct Relief and Lucas teams implemented the Lucas Warehouse Optimization Suite, powered with unique AI-based intelligence and embodied by Jennifer™, its voice and orchestration engine, which concentrated mainly on the outbound distribution function. Within one month of implementation, they saw a **20% increase in picking accuracy**.

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*“Once we implemented Jennifer, we’ve pretty much had zero mistakes. It’s pretty incredible. At the picking point, the accuracy is so good.”*  
Direct Relief Operations Director

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## Standardizing picking styles drives employee satisfaction

With the Lucas Warehouse Optimization Suite in place, Direct Relief was able to combine or standardize picking styles, whether piece pick, case pick or pallet pick, so everyone was picking the same way, something they weren't able to do previously. The employee satisfaction gains were so great that the operations director said a 30-year employee told him,

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*"You've changed my whole life with this. I go home at night and I don't have numbers spinning through my head. I don't have to worry because I know the picking accuracy is there."*

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The accuracy is driven mainly by the process of check string validation via real-time communication with Jennifer. Jennifer routes the worker to a bin location, directs them to pick the unit, and the worker will then voice back the last three digits of the manufacturer's lot number which is then verified almost instantaneously by Jennifer.



# Utilizing the workforce more efficiently, including less on-floor travel

Another important aspect of the implementation of the Lucas Warehouse Optimization Suite was enabling the use of the Direct Relief workforce more efficiently. Because Jennifer gave them the ability to verify lot numbers at the time of pick, they did not have to spend labor time double and triple checking for accuracy.

According to the operations director, “We’d pick our batch number from the location and then the double check was done with the vendor batch. We would then line things up on a pallet, and we’d have another person checking that. After about an hour and a half, your head is literally spinning.” With Jennifer, that is no longer a concern.

The flexibility allows administrators to better manage time and assign workers to other tasks and areas where assistance may be needed. New associate training is another area of efficiency and productivity gains. Anticipating a long ramp up time because of the complexity of their operation and the many languages and dialects among their workforce, leaders were thrilled with the **average of three hours training time new workers required.**

Due to the overwhelming success of Jennifer in the picking process, Direct Relief has also deployed Lucas warehouse optimization modules for their cycle count as well as their putaway and bin transfer processes.

The gains in efficiency are nicely summarized in a humorous story from one of the workers. “We have a wellness program that rewards workers for healthy habits and activities,” said the operations director. “After we went live with Jennifer, a worker told me he went from 12,000 to 2000 steps a day. The only bad thing about this is now I have to start going to the gym,” he said.

Lucas Systems helps companies transform their distribution center operations and continuously adapt to changing market dynamics. We dramatically increase worker productivity, operational agility, and customer satisfaction. Our solutions are built on 25+ years of deep process expertise and smart software using AI and voice technologies. Our solutions feature Jennifer™, the brain, voice, and orchestration engine that drives performance improvement gains. Make the smartest moves at the lowest cost with Jennifer™.



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