

THOMAS RIDLEY

Thomas Ridley benefits from Accord® Voice WMS



Food service distributor Thomas Ridley Food service is realising major performance improvements and savings of more than £175,000 p.a. following a major investment in **Accord®** Voice Directed **WMS software** from supply chain software and warehouse management systems specialist BCP (Business Computer Projects Ltd).

Founded 200 years ago, Thomas Ridley remains a family owned business, but has grown to become one of the UK's leading independent delivered wholesalers. It uses its own fleet of 45 temperature controlled vehicles to provide a multi-temperature delivery service to caterers across England with a comprehensive product range of chilled, ambient, frozen professional hygiene and catering sundries. Customers include schools, hospitals, pubs and restaurants, care and residential homes, and the leisure sector.

The Challenge

Committed to delivering the best possible customer service, the investment in Voice was prompted by Thomas Ridley's expanding customer base and, in particular, by a desire to increase accuracy in order to improve the customer experience, ease out of stocks and reduce the costs associated with rectifying incorrect deliveries. Although using computerised stock control and RF scanning for Goods Receiving, manual, paper based procedures were still in use for other warehouse operations. Though efficient, these were still subject to human error – a significant factor for an operation the size of Thomas Ridley where 1000 deliveries per day are assembled from over 10,000 different sku's.

The Solution

Aware of the reputation of BCP's **Accord** Voice warehouse management system and BCP's pedigree in the foodservice sector, Thomas Ridley decided to invest in **Accord** Voice WMS with Vocollect T5 hardware for all warehouse operations from put away through picking and replenishment to stocktaking and perpetual inventory.

BCP worked closely with Thomas Ridley's in-house IT team to phase the system in over the course of a 12 month period, starting in the most complex department – frozen goods – followed by the chilled department and finally, the largest of the three departments, ambient goods.

The Results

Once checked in by RF scanning, goods in the 100,000 sq foot warehouse are now managed entirely by Voice, with 65 workers using the system.

"**Accord®** Voice has transformed operations," says Thomas Ridley MD Justin Godfrey, "more than living up to our expectations."

As expected, increased accuracy has been one of the greatest benefits with picking errors now virtually eliminated and service levels running at more than 99.99%. The company has been able to dispense with an expensive manual order checking operation and conservatively estimates direct savings of £150,000 p.a. from reduction in mis-picks. "It's phenomenal," says Justin Godfrey, "We've virtually eradicated all errors and that leads to very happy customers – a massive intangible benefit we just can't measure."



Productivity has also improved as workers have benefited from the hands-free, eyes-free nature of voice allowing them to focus fully on their work. Direct interaction with the WMS, removal of the need to visit the office to collect new assignments, and more accurate real time stock information which minimises re-picks and time spent exploring stock inconsistencies have all contributed to an increase in productivity of around 10%. "Moreover, the system allows us to analyse individual worker productivity," explains Justin, "meaning we can spot any potential bottlenecks, address any issues and schedule operations more efficiently."

There have also been major stationery and administration savings as the use of paper lists and associated tasks such as printing and distributing lists and re-keying picking confirmations and order amendments have been removed.

Overall, Thomas Ridley estimates a massive 10% saving in labour costs with the introduction of **Accord** Voice WMS.

The new technology has been readily adopted by warehouse workers and training of new workers is now much faster, allowing them to become productive much more quickly.

Justin Godfrey concludes: "The use of **Accord** Voice across our warehouse has transformed operations, delivering even greater improvements and savings than we'd dreamed of. We now have full visibility and an accurate audit trail across the warehouse and I believe we now have the lowest cost of labour per unit of sale within the foodservice industry. We're expecting to realise even greater efficiencies as we use the data we're gathering from the system to re-lay the warehouse to optimise both the use of space and movements within it."

