

COMPANY: BALFORD FARMS

INDUSTRY: INDEPENDENT WHOLESALE DAIRY AND FOODS DISTRIBUTOR

VOICE-POWERED RESULTS:

OBJECTIVES

- /// **Achieve better management of DC by increasing order accuracy, worker productivity and customer satisfaction.**

RESULTS

- /// **Eliminated order inaccuracies and truck shortages across multiple delivery routes.**
- /// **Increased productivity and worker morale amongst DC management, union workers and truck drivers.**
- /// **Provided flexibility to implement new concepts for streamlining order selection.**
- /// **Achieved payback within a year.**

FUTURE IMPROVEMENTS

- /// **Eventually expand Vocollect Voice® to put-away and receiving applications and deploy in newly acquired DCs.**



Vocollect Voice Transforms Balford Farms from Backend Order Selection to Front-Line Workers

Founded in 1891, Balford Farms is the oldest continuously operating independent dairy distributor serving the greater Philadelphia and Lehigh Valley areas of Pennsylvania; central and southern New Jersey; along with portions of Delaware, Maryland, Virginia and Washington DC. With approximately 200 employees and over \$70 million in annual revenues, Balford offers a product line in excess of 1,000 dairy-related and specialty food products, specializing in complete lines of milk, cream, ice cream mixes, drinks, cheeses and gourmet foods.

The company services over 6,000 institutions ranging from nationwide convenience stores, multinational coffee retailers and national frozen dessert retailers, to nursing homes, schools, colleges, 'mom and pop' stores and restaurants. Balford encompasses the entire movement of product from the receipt of, to the loading of trucks, through the delivery to its customers.

Supported by Vocollect Voice, Balford Farms' ensures that products are properly received, stored, inventoried and expedited to customers in the most accurate and efficient manner possible.

"I'm amazed at how inexpensive Vocollect Voice really is. Without it, our workers were prone to mistakes. But with it, we're always dead-on in our order accuracy. With the amount of money it's saving, we've easily achieved payback within a year."

Wayne Baldwin
Chief Information Officer
Balford Farms

The Challenge **Improve Overall Management of DC**

According to Wayne Baldwin, chief information officer for Baldwin Farms, prior to voice, they were working with paper-based load manifests and errors were being made.

"We had three different categories of order selection and our load sheets average four pages, with over 30 items per page," explained Baldwin. "It was very easy for our workers to accidentally miss lines, and reconciling the sectioned load sheets from multiple pickers was confusing. Occasionally, inaccurate orders were loaded on trucks with no correct documentation to support what should have been loaded. To make matters worse, our workers operate in refrigerated environments wearing safety-helmets, which often impairs their vision when having to read the load sheets. We understood that mistakes could happen; but we knew we had to change."

The Approach **Voice Improves Accuracy and Productivity**

Baldwin contacted Vocollect and attended its 'DC Performance Series' event in Princeton, and liked what he saw. He initiated an onsite meeting with Vocollect, which didn't waste time in getting its technical team involved. "I was concerned because our warehouse management system (WMS) is home-grown; we operate mainframe computers with every aspect of our process custom-designed," said Baldwin. "But Vocollect demonstrated how to easily interface voice with our WMS via Vocollect Voice."

With synchronization concerns behind him, Baldwin saw where DC workers could move fluidly from item to item, order to order, without constant eye movement to hardcopy, writing or stopping. "I've never experienced such an 'instant sell' in my life," he said. "I knew we could implement voice – and that somehow, we would do it."

He took his proposal to the corporate partners, convinced them it would work – and they agreed. They kicked-off implementation with a two-week pilot co-managed by Vocollect, operating 1-1/2 DC shifts with trucks dispatched over multiple separate shifts.

"Vocollect just makes my job that much easier and also improves customer satisfaction. Vocollect Voice is that good."

George Call

Truck Driver and Member of Teamsters 463
Balford Farms

Because they literally customize order selection techniques to accommodate a vast assortment of clientele special needs, Balford Farms does not handle order selection in any standard manner. "We now do various automated picking sequences – by route, by customer, and a combination of route/customer. This new process saves time. We're more productive and efficient, but not just in warehouse or on routes – we're seeing the effect all the way to accounting."

With regard to worker acceptance and training, Baldwin describes that when they hire someone, the DC manager puts them on voice and they're productive immediately. "During the pilot," said Baldwin, "we intentionally employed a relatively new hire on voice and Vocollect was so intuitive he was working efficiently within minutes."

And Vocollect is dynamic allowing the propagation of existing concepts; "On the paper load sheets, we'd tell order selectors how many stacks of an item to select; how many cases and how many loose units," said Baldwin. "Voice gave us the flexibility to devise new concepts for sending individual lines to accommodate unique order selection."

Today, there are 13 workers utilizing Vocollect Voice concurrently for order selection. As the company continues to grow, it plans to expand. "We want to bring voice into put-away and replenishment applications in the long-term," said Baldwin. "Our growing business dictates that we keep an open mind toward expanding our warehouses both locally and remotely and without question, voice will be part of every Balford DC."

The Results **Efficiency from the Backend to the Front-line**

Balford Farms attributes Vocollect Voice to vastly improving accuracy and productivity across the board. But the results go one step further – impressing its DC managers, union workers and drivers.

"Vocollect just makes my job that much easier and also improves customer satisfaction," said George Call, a route person for Balford Farms and member of Teamsters local 463. "I've steadily seen accuracy on loads increase with the installation of Vocollect." George is very happy that Balford has committed to improving order fulfillment – "Vocollect Voice is that good," he said. According to Baldwin, "Our DC managers said, 'Don't ever get rid of this. We don't want to go back to paper.'"

With regard to payback, Baldwin has been equally impressed. "It's tough for us to put a number on ROI," he explained, "But I'm amazed at how inexpensive Vocollect Voice really is. Without it, our workers were prone to mistakes. But with it, we're always dead-on in our order accuracy. With the amount of money it's saving, we've easily achieved payback within a year. To me, there's no better metric than that."



www.vocollect.com

© Copyright March 2007, Vocollect, Inc.
All rights reserved. Vocollect® and Vocollect Voice® are registered trademarks of Vocollect, Inc. All rights reserved.

Vocollect Americas:
info@vocollect.com
412.829.8145

Vocollect Europe:
voc_emea@vocollect.com

Vocollect Latin America:
latin_america@vocollect.com

Vocollect Japan:
japan@vocollect.com