

Globus: **confidence in technology innovation**

The Globus group of companies, founded in 1828 in St. Wendel, Saarland, ranks among the leading retail operations in Germany. Nationally there are 34 department stores, 48 DIY stores and 12 electrical equipment outlets belonging to the Globus group. There are a further 10 department stores and one DIY store in the Czech Republic. With almost 23,000 employees Globus generates an annual gross turnover of around 4 billion Euros. One of the company's strategies is to centralise the supply of goods to all of its department stores. Vocollect's voice-powered system helps to streamline warehouse management, ensuring that approximately 15,500 different products are in the right place at the right time.



The Challenge:

to get the most out of new logistics procedures

Distribution requirements for the retail industry are constantly growing. A combination of highly efficient solutions and the highest level of supply quality are paramount to minimising the cost of logistics, while at the same time maximising customer satisfaction. With this Globus took the decision in the mid-nineties to centralise the supply of goods to its department stores, which previously had been supplied directly by the manufacturers themselves. Soon afterwards in 1999, the company established a state-of-the-art logistics centre in Bingen on the Rhine. Globus' central warehouse for Germany, which resides within a 85,000 square metre premises, currently houses approximately 15,500 different products in 90,000 pallet locations, including the usual off-the-shelf products, as well as fresh and frozen goods. These are distributed to Globus' 34 department stores across Germany using 220 fork-lift trucks via 189 LGV gates, resulting in approximately 300 LGV loads every day.

Soon after the logistics hub was fully operational the company began searching for new opportunities to optimise warehouse procedures. Among other things, order picking became a key focus area for potential management improvements. This was largely due to the impact that even the smallest of errors in this area can have on the supply chain, particularly in the retail industry. Incorrectly delivered products can lead to incorrect systems entries, which result in the need for a great deal of corrective input. Furthermore missing deliveries lead to empty shelves, creating a bad image for the store in the eye of the consumer. With this in mind the company's management looked for a solution that would not only contribute to improvements in order picking performance, but perhaps more importantly reduce the error rate during order picking, ultimately improving supply quality.

"Thanks to the introduction of voice technology in the warehouse, we are already well on the way to reducing order picking errors to an absolute minimum."

Christian Groß
Warehouse Manager
Global Logistics Centre

Voice results

Objectives

- Minimization of order picking errors
- Improvement in supply quality

Application

- Order picking of non-temperature-controlled, temperature-controlled and frozen goods

Installation

- Inventory control system DISPOS II, SAP
- Warehouse management system WAMAS, Salomon Automation
- 100 Talkman™ T2 terminals
- Radio network in accordance with IEEE 802.11b Standard

Results

- Reducing picking errors by 70%

Future Improvements

- Accuracy up to 99.99%
- Differentiation in a challenging industry

"With the user-friendly Talkman terminals our order pickers are able to work quicker and more accurately. We have already seen a rapid improvement in our supply quality."

**Norbert Schillo
Manager,
Globus Logistik
und Service GmbH**

The Solution:

voice technology for order pickers

Globus quickly realised that a voice-powered warehouse system - a technology with which employees communicate verbally with the warehouse management system using a wearable computer integrated into a radio network, - would provide the ideal solution. In the first instance Globus was slightly cautious with their enquiries in this area as the systems available in Germany up until then had not proven convincing to the management. Nevertheless this caution was quickly abandoned at the end of 2002 when Vocollect introduced Talkman, its latest voice-directed distribution system.

The Vocollect Talkman T2 terminals are perfectly geared towards operation within a warehouse environment: they are simple to use, extremely durable, can be easily adapted to the user's specific requirements and enable an instantaneous voice and radio dialogue. Following an extensive evaluation process, German Auto-ID and radio specialist Zetes IND was retained to integrate Vocollect's voice technology solution into Globus' existing warehouse management and radio system. In fact Zetes IND had already been responsible for other technology platforms within warehouses throughout the Globus group for some years. Since 2003 around 100 Talkman T2 devices have been in operation within Globus' central warehouse. Approximately 40 of these are used within the off-the-shelf products area and a further 60 in the fresh and frozen produce area. The Talkman mobile computers are worn on the belt by order pickers. Users receive instructions and responses from the main warehouse management system via a headset and can also send information back to the system. The voice system utilises a software package specifically designed for industrial environments, which ensures the reliable recognition and conversion of spoken commands almost entirely without interference from extraneous noise, regardless of the user's accent or dialect.

The Result:

increased productivity, improved supply quality

Globus' voice technology implementation enables employees in the warehouse to be far more focussed on their work than before. They can work "Hands-free, Eyes-free™", as they no longer require paper lists, hand-held scanners or any other inconvenient devices. Likewise, they no longer have to go to the trouble of handling labels. The outcome is a distinctly faster, safer and more accurate method of working. The Talkman technology also allows for extremely rapid verification of all details on the system, providing users with an immediate response. In order to ensure that order pickers really do pick up the correct product in the correct quantity and at the right location, all of the necessary details are sent through in sequence during the actual picking process, ending with an "OK" command. Afterwards the warehouse management system sends back either a confirmation or a negative reply naming the error that was made. Within Globus' system the last two digits of the EAN number of the product act as check digits. This means that errors during order picking are virtually impossible, with the error rate being reduced by around 70 per cent. Moreover there has been a corresponding improvement in the supply quality. The voice-powered warehouse system from Vocollect demonstrates particular benefits and improvements within the frozen food area of the Globus warehouse. Traditional data acquisition devices with LCD displays are only useful to a limited extent here. Keyboards can barely be operated using thick gloves and it is virtually impossible to apply or remove labels. An additional factor that should not be underestimated is how quickly Globus employees have not only taken to the new technology, but are even enthusiastic about it. Because the Talkman's functionality is intuitive, disruptions in work flow have decreased considerably. This faster and error-free method of working boosts employee productivity and makes it easier for them to attain performance bonuses. 🚀

**VOICE-DIRECTED
WAREHOUSE OPERATIONS:
AN INTEGRAL FACTOR IN
GLOBUS' SUCCESS FOR
THE FUTURE.**



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About Zetes IND:
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Vocollect. Voice-Directed Distribution.

Since pioneering voice recognition for industrial applications in 1987, Vocollect has set the standard for voice-directed distribution systems for warehouse and industrial operations, and today is the world's leading provider of voice integrated solutions.

Together, its market-leading Talkman wearable mobile systems and its integrated software suite cut operating costs by eliminating errors and improving worker productivity and safety shift after shift, with a payback in less than 12 months. Leading WMS providers, material handling integrators and specialty voice solution providers around the world choose the performance and reliability of Vocollect to deliver integrated voice-directed distribution solutions. And every day, over 80,000 workers around the globe rely on Vocollect's integrated voice solution to help improve their companies operations and profitability.

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