

MODERNISING THE WAREHOUSE PUTS RALEIGH AHEAD OF THE PACK

Ask anyone in the UK to remember their first bike and the chances are that one brand is mentioned more fondly than any other – Raleigh. The company is one of the most successful bicycle brands in history, stretching back to its foundations in Raleigh Street, Nottingham, in 1885, and growing to become one of the largest manufacturers and distributors of bicycles and accessories in the UK and around the world.

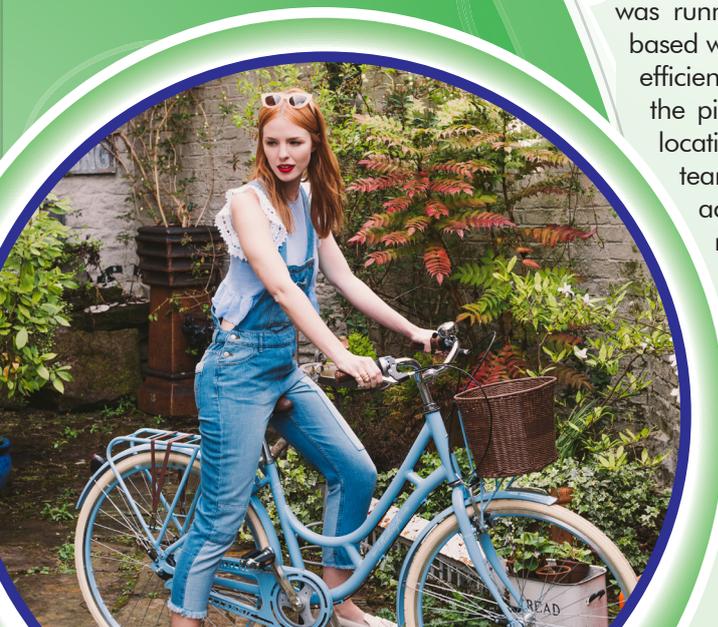
For many bike fans, Raleigh is adored for its iconic Chopper, Mustang and famed 'Banana' road bike from the 1980s, which is now a sought-after collector's item amongst British hipsters. Raleigh's pioneering designs and reliability have kept it at the forefront of the bike business for decades. In order to keep pace with its flourishing e-commerce business, Raleigh undertook a project to transform its warehouse into a faster and sleeker operation.

NEEDS

Raleigh's Parts and Accessories business was running a manual, completely paper-based warehouse system, which was not as efficient as it could have been in terms of the picking process, resulting in a lot of location errors. Furthermore, the admin team were always a few hours behind actual stock levels on products, so managing sales in real-time was impossible. This was compounded by the seasonality of the bicycle business, which means that Raleigh employs seasonal workers at peak times of the year to keep pace with customer demand. However the paper-based system only made training more difficult and further slowed down their productivity.

UK super brand Raleigh eliminates error-prone paper based system, gaining:

- ***99.9% stock accuracy levels, up from 96%***
- ***Increase in worker productivity***
- ***Real-time stock control***
- ***Creation of a flexible pick-face***
- ***Faster training of new staff and seasonal workers***



THE SOLUTION

Raleigh knew it needed to change and brought in BEC (Systems Integration) Ltd, a UK-based leader in data capture solutions for supply chain logistics and manufacturing, to map out a project to automate the warehouse in its entirety. BEC proposed a two-phase project using its eSmart® WMS software underpinned by Honeywell hardware to update the goods-in and goods-out sides of Raleigh's Parts and Accessories business. At every stage of the process, BEC was on hand to help ensure a smooth delivery of the project.

Phase One focused on the receiving and picking side of the business, eliminating existing issues around stock control by ensuring that all the stock received into the warehouse was barcoded. Raleigh used Honeywell barcode scanners to make sure that everything coming into the business was scanned and coded appropriately and that the data was correct before products could move forward into the storage and distribution process.

Honeywell CK3 mobile computers were selected for receiving goods-in as they are designed for rugged warehouse environments. For packing, Raleigh opted for 3820 cordless Bluetooth scanners, which are ideal for scanning applications where freedom of movement is essential.



Phase Two dealt with picking and replenishment, equipping warehouse staff with Vocollect A730 Talkman devices, which are purpose-built for voice-recognition in challenging warehouse environments. The A730 integrates a voice-activated scanner so workers are completely 'hands-free', while SRX2 headsets allow them to communicate directly with the warehouse management system.

THE RESULTS

When the management team at Raleigh first informed the workforce that they were looking at implementing voice and scanning technology, there was a degree of trepidation, especially about how effective the voice technology would be, however it was well received and there have been no negative issues.



Introducing voice-directed workflows into the warehouse has had an additional benefit for training seasonal workers, who can now be fully trained up within a couple of days and are immediately working with great accuracy.

For Raleigh's pickers and packers, the voice system works well and is quick, being much more efficient than paper. The workers report that the headsets are extremely comfortable to wear and that they forget they are wearing them in no time.

The improvements have led to an increase in worker productivity, enabling them to pack and launch much more quickly, accurately and effectively.

Raleigh also has access to more data than ever before regarding all the picks, packs and processes happening within the warehouse. One of the key benefits is that Raleigh is now able to produce individual carton packing lists, which it couldn't do before.

Compared with paper, the use of Honeywell's scanners and the Vocollect voice system gives more accuracy and control. It also adds the benefits of real-time stock control because personnel are recording directly into the Warehouse Management System about stock movement, allowing for a real-time view on available stock, whereas it used to take between two and three hours to update the system.

Furthermore, BEC's eSmart® solution lets Raleigh manage an unlimited number of concurrent orders, which is essential in enabling the management and growth of its e-commerce business.

The benefits of the new system have even spread to the physical layout of the warehouse. Raleigh has been able to create a flexible pick-face which has quadrupled the number of locations it has for picking without increasing the physical space.

Due to the success of the Honeywell and BEC system, Raleigh now plans to extend the solution across the rest of the business.