

BUSINESS IS BLOOMING FOR FLOWERVISION (BRISTOL) LTD THANKS TO VOICE-ENABLED SCANNING SOLUTION FROM BEC

Supplying florists on a daily basis from Cornwall to Worcester, Flowervision (Bristol) Ltd is an independent wholesaler of high-quality fresh cut flowers and plants as well as a vast range of sundries. Flowervision (Bristol) is also part of the wider Flowervision group which has subsidiary companies in Birmingham, Lancashire, Norwich, London, Nottingham and Southampton, as well as in France and Germany.

Although all independently owned, the Flowervision Group has a unique relationship and very close links with 'van Duyvenvoorde,' the group's Dutch exporting partners based at the Flora Holland flower auction in Aalsmeer.

Renowned for supplying fresh and high-quality produce, Flowervision (Bristol) also prides itself on offering high levels of customer service as well as employing staff who have a number of years' experience and knowledge within the flower trade, working in dedicated teams within each department.

As part of a drive to further improve the company's customer service offering, Flowervision (Bristol) worked closely with BEC (Systems Integration) Ltd in order to automate their order picking and fulfilment processes. In the knowledge that an off-the-shelf package would not fit their needs, BEC subsequently developed a bespoke voice-enabled data capture scanning solution for Flowervision (Bristol) which was specifically aligned to their requirements.

THE PROBLEM

Flowervision (Bristol) were previously using a pen and paper-based system to fulfil orders and didn't use any barcoding for the picking of orders.

Nick Hudson, General Manager at Flowervision (Bristol), explains: "Due to a lack of automation within our facility for order picking we were unfortunately experiencing errors which in turn lead to order mix ups, meaning that some of our customers were occasionally let down with their orders."



We knew that we needed to develop a method of picking products which was a lot more accurate since the provision of high levels of customer service is a top priority for us as a business. We carried out an internet search for voice picking and management solution providers and came across BEC. We spoke to an alternative supplier initially, however after meeting with BEC we decided to work with them on the project moving forward."

Based in Blackburn, Lancashire, BEC is a specialist provider of future-proof and innovative automated data capture solutions designed to integrate seamlessly into any host ERP system to fulfil business and commercial needs. With a specific focus on the supply chain and manufacturing industries, BEC's level of expertise spans the complete spectrum of AIDC technologies.



Hudson continues "Right from the offset we quickly came to the conclusion that BEC understood what we needed to achieve from a new system and really took the time to understand our operational processes. Since our system requirements were not straightforward, BEC undertook a detailed evaluation of our business in order to come up with a suitable bespoke solution which worked for us, giving us the confidence that they would be able to overcome all the non-standard elements of our process."

THE SOLUTION

Flowervision (Bristol)'s new solution is used within their warehouse facility which includes both refrigerated and cash and carry areas. Comprising of BEC's eSmart® Voice software running on A730 Talkman devices from Honeywell Vocollect coupled with SRX2 cordless headsets, the solution is used for

all of Flowervision (Bristol)'s order picking processes. Each product within the warehouse has now been given a unique locations identifier, allowing operatives to accurately follow instructions received through the speech recognition wireless headsets in order to pick and pack items correctly.

Hudson explains: "We operate a web shop which is used by the vast majority of our customers which include independent retailers and florists across the South West of the UK within an 80-mile radius. 80% of what we sell is picked and packed overnight, while the rest is sold to customers coming into our facility and making a direct, face-to-face purchase.

Our web shop opens at 3pm which allows our customers to see what's available in stock within our warehouse as well as what has been bought that morning and transported from Holland for arrival in Bristol overnight. Initial picks are carried out from our held stock, while new products from the lorry deliveries are placed in defined product locations within our warehouse and fridges. Once the products are put into the correct locations we can then start picking and packing orders overnight for shipment first thing in the morning. The new solution has enabled us to pick all items with an incredibly high level of accuracy and has ensured that all orders which go out of the door are correct."

Philip Jarrett, Director of Sales & Marketing at BEC, explains "By developing the software after in-depth exploratory discussions with Flowervision (Bristol) we were able to find out exactly what was happening 'out on the floor' and put solutions in place to eradicate any bottlenecks or other issues. We also ensured that the entire solution worked seamlessly with Flowervision (Bristol)'s Florisoft ERP system, which is critical to their business and overall operational processes. The use of voice technology was also pivotal in the overall success of the solution. Conceptually, voice-directed technology is very similar to traditional RF scanning, but prompts are delivered and responses are provided verbally. The Honeywell Vocollect Voice technology, on which our solution is based, helps businesses increase worker productivity by up to 35 percent, whilst achieving up to 99.99 percent picking accuracy."

THE RESULT

Flowervision (Bristol) has experienced a number of business benefits as a result of the new BEC solution, predominantly improved customer services levels, thanks to the ability to achieve better picking accuracy.



Hudson explains: "The main benefit of the solution is that picking accuracy has dramatically increased. At the end of every night our pick room should be empty however with our previous pen and paper method we sometimes had a number of products left over which meant that some orders hadn't been fulfilled correctly. This would be particularly problematic when fulfilling orders for one-off events such as weddings and funerals where mistakes can't be made, so we were ultimately spending a lot of time, money and resource rectifying incorrect orders. With the new solution this doesn't happen and customer satisfaction has significantly improved as a result."



Vocollect SRX3 Headset

gentler handling of our products during the picking and packing process."

Overall, the reaction to the solution has been extremely positive with a highly successful working relationship between Flowervision (Bristol) and BEC having been established throughout the process.

Hudson explains: "As a company, we strive to work with businesses who can offer us a good working relationship and constructive face-to-face interactions. This is far more important to us than getting the cheapest price for a solution and this positive interaction was something which BEC was able to deliver. BEC took the time to understand the solution we required so as a result of that, coupled with their vast amount of experience in implementing voice systems, we have got everything we asked for – and more. Since the software is so stable our support and maintenance requirements have been minimal, however on the odd occasion that we have required assistance the resolution time has been extremely quick and efficient. We have received a highly robust solution which we don't have to worry about on a day-to-day basis which continues to deliver great results for us as a business, drastically improving our overall functionality, accuracy, efficiency and profitability."

Hudson concludes: "In the New Year we are planning to extend the solution into the stock-taking and sundries elements of the business. We are also looking to evaluate a scanning solution for deliveries in order to compliment the current voice-picking function and have recently ordered a number of the new Honeywell Vocollect SRX3 wireless headsets as they are equipped with improved functionality in order to cope with noisy refrigerated environments. We currently have a pilot of the solution running in Holland and we are also hoping to extend the system into Flowervision in Norwich in the near future."



Despite Flowervision (Bristol)'s picking staff being initially sceptical of the new technology as they were used to working with the old paper-based system, the new solution has also been well received by the warehouse employees.

Hudson explains: "After the new solution was implemented, our pickers quickly came to realise that it would help them with their day-to-day picking accuracy and got used to it very quickly. They understood that we needed it to help them fulfil their tasks more accurately and efficiently and had an appreciation of the benefits to the business as a result of implementing the new system.

The BEC solution also provides us with dashboards which give us full visibility of staff picking performance, enabling us to discover which members of staff are most productive as well as highlighting any issues. Staff training times have also been reduced; new product pickers are now up and running quickly and seamlessly and without having any prior flower knowledge, as the systems simply tells them what to pick. This has been facilitated by the ability to define product location as well as using check digits via the voice system to ensure that items are picked correctly. Staff are also now able to work hands-free rather than picking items with papers under their arm and a pen in their mouth, allowing for the



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