

LIFEWAY CHRISTIAN RESOURCES CASE STUDY

How LifeWay implemented voice-directed picking in the warehouse to overcome mispicks and accuracy issues



VITECH

 **LifeWay**
Biblical Solutions for Life

ABOUT LIFEWAY

LifeWay Christian Resources was founded in 1891 with the purpose of creating and distributing bible study resources to local churches. Now, more than one hundred years later, LifeWay is one of the leading providers of biblical materials in the world, providing bibles, books, CDs and more to over 160 countries.

LifeWay runs their distribution out of a single 350,000 square foot distribution center (DC) in Lebanon, Tennessee, located about 30 miles outside of Nashville. This DC handles nearly 15,000 unique SKU's, with more than 3,000 orders being fulfilled each day.

Key Facts:

- **Company name:** LifeWay Christian Resources
- **Orders per day:** 3,000
- **Unique SKU's:** 15,000+
- **Number of DC's:** 1
- **Countries served:** 160
- 69.8% reduction in line errors
- 83% decrease in training time
- 6.5% increase in productivity

SELECTING VOICE

LifeWay was driven to consider voice after struggling to improve their 91.17% accuracy rate with paper. "Having to carry the pen and pencil, and marking items off as you go, was cumbersome and error prone," said Justin Sullivan, Manager of Supply Chain and Systems for LifeWay.

They started investigating voice, driven by the desire to implement voice for multi-pick and multi-put workflows. "We wanted our solution to be as user-directed as possible, so voice was really the only option. RF Scanning lacked the capabilities we were looking for, and setting up our entire warehouse with pick-to-light would have been too costly," recalled Sullivan. LifeWay also focused on the accuracy benefits that voice could provide, since it was the area that needed the most improvement.

"Voice offered the ability to be hands free and focus on the task at hand, without worrying if you missed a line on the pick list or marked something incorrectly," said Sullivan.

LifeWay ultimately chose to work with Vitech Business Group, platinum-level Vocollect partner. According to Sullivan, the decision was easy. "Vitech was the only vendor we talked to that had proven experience with doing multi-pick and multi-put the way we wanted it done, and that was our biggest deciding factor."

THE IMPLEMENTATION

The implementation at LifeWay was focused on the picking procedures in the warehouse, ensuring that capabilities for multi-pick and multi-put were matched to the company's procedures of picking eaches to cart. Vitech worked with LifeWay to make sure each new process was mapped into the warehouse's software, and that all involved parties were kept up to date. "Vitech was a great partner to work with, from RFP to completion. Throughout the process we had to get many different staff members involved, both on our end and Vitech's, and we always had a really positive experience."



Once the groundwork for the solution had been laid, the company focused on change management, working with the pickers to ensure the new solution would be received well. "We knew there was going to be apprehension, like with any change, so we were very deliberate about involving some of the actual users on the floor. We grabbed a variety of pickers, from our most experienced pickers to our newest, and brought them in to help with testing. Those individuals helped spread their positive experiences, so we didn't have to do much convincing once voice went live," recalled Sullivan.

THE RESULTS

Accuracy

While there were a host of benefits that LifeWay saw from implementing voice, according to Sullivan, accuracy was the big win. "We could see accuracy improvements within the first few days. That was a big deal for us – we didn't expect to see that kind of accuracy improvement so quickly." Those results continued throughout the first year, allowing LifeWay to reduce the line pick error rate from 1.29% to .39%.



Productivity

“We were already pretty productive, so we weren’t really expecting much of an improvement to that,” said Sullivan. “But we did see a 6.5% improvement, and every bit helps.”

Training Time

Training time also saw the benefits of voice, with training time for a new picker dropping from three full shifts to only four hours. “The faster we are able to get new people plugged into our operation, the better we can utilize new employees,” claimed Sullivan.

Cycle Counting

In addition to using voice to complete picking, LifeWay also included the ability for their pickers to use voice for cycle counting as they move through the pick process. “We still have dedicated cycle counters, but we now utilize our pickers as well. If they arrive at a location that has inventory below a set threshold, the voice system will ask them to confirm the number of items available. It’s really helped us stay on top of inventory control,” said Sullivan.

Language Recognition

When asked what the biggest surprise about voice was, Sullivan claimed that it was the ability for the voice system to recognize any language, accent or dialect. “Just to test the system, I trained all of my number responses for a test template in Spanish. Even though I don’t speak Spanish on a day to day basis, I thought if it could recognize a different language, it could probably handle a strong Tennessee accent.”



FINAL THOUGHTS

When asked if he had any final advice for someone considering voice, Sullivan stated it simply. “Voice is not right for every warehouse, but if it’s right for you, you’re likely to get a lot out of it.” He also stressed the importance of finding the right partner for your implementation.

“For a project to be successful, you need to find someone that listens to your needs and what you want, and does everything they can to find the best solution to meet those needs. Vitech was that kind of partner for us.”

ABOUT VITECH

Since 2005, Vitech has helped our customers select, purchase, design, implement, administer, and upgrade their Vocollect Voice solutions. As a Premier Vocollect Voice Total Solution Provider, and a Vocollect Partner of the Year, we know how important it is to get a voice system that meets your expectations. Our team is committed to seeing projects through from concept to completion, and we bring our voice expertise and best practices to every implementation. With a broad base of voice customers around the globe, every day Vitech continues to deliver customized voice solutions that meet the needs of our customers, both today and in the future.

To learn more about Vitech, please visit www.vitechgroup.com.