VOICE PICKING

The Voice Picking is starting to be implemented in warehouses. It is a new topic of interest for the logistician. How does it work ? What are the benefits on productivity and service reliability ? What is the ROI of such projects ? These are the questions that we will be analysing.

The main objective of Voice Picking is the use of voice as a mean of communication between the WMS and the operator.
Voice Picking uses voice recognition technology. The operator is equipped with a terminal fixed on him (on his belt or in his pocket), he receives vocal orders through an headset and validates or transmits information through a microphone. It is possible to include controls in the process (the operator must vocally confirm the prepared quantity, the picking adress...).
It exempts from the necessity of an access terminal on forklift trucks or of a radiofrequency handset to register orders and capture data on the field.

The most evident application domain for voice recognition is the order picking, but other warehousing processes can use this technology (inventories, picking resupply, cross docking...)

The benefits of Voice Picking on the productivity and the customer service are significant:

- the operator is more focused on his missions,
- the operator piloting is made step by step,
- both hands are available,
- it is not necessary to the operator to remove its gloves (safety related to the maniplation of certain products, steered temperature),
- It is not necessary to print documents (list of preparations...).

Voice Picking allows to obtain higher data quality than other AIDC (Automatic Information Data Collection) technologies.
As a support of a well conceived and implemented process, voice picking can lead to picking reliability rates of 99.9 %
It also allows a productivity growth of about 15%.

To measure the ROI related to Voice Picking implementation, the logistician will integrated the follwing savings:

- cost of reverse logistics or client dispute treatment reduction due to the picking errors reduction (studies show a picking error rate reduction between 80% and 90%)
- warehouse productivity savings
- unnecessaries movements reduction (the information is real time communicated)
- reduction of documents editions (support is only voice)
- reduction of training effort (more intuitive technology)
- reduction of accidents risk (in certain environments)

The highest ROI was noticed in environments with low margin and high order lines quantities. Therefore, it is not a surprise that the retail industry is frequently an user of this technology.

Voice picking terminals exist on market, but so are mixt terminals allowing both manual and voice seizure. This dual technology prevent from buying specific equipements and therefore, a quicker return on investment (possible utilization for many warehouse activities).