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Talkin' Innovation

TopVOX is heard loud and clear in competitive voice technology market.

Voice-directed picking solutions have come a long way over the past 10 years. Thanks to continual improvements in its capabilities, such as being able to better “hear” workers voices and screen out background noises, coupled with a quick payback and as much as a 50 percent reduction in errors, the use of voice technology has become very common in today’s food and beverage warehouses.

While the voice technology playing field in the United States has been dominated by a couple of leading solution providers, a small European company has slowly and stealthily developed a loyal client base in North America, Mexico and beyond.

That company, topVOX Corp., a subsidiary of the German company TopSystem, is the European market leader in voice technology. In recent years, however, firms such as third-party logistics provider ODW Logistics Inc. in Columbus, OH; Cooper-Booth Wholesale Co., a convenience store and restaurant distributor in Pennsylvania; and Bepensa, a Mexican distributor for Coca Cola beverages, have chosen solutions from topVOX.

What sets TopVOX’s solution, topSPEECH-Lydia, apart from its competitors, says Andreas Finken, president and general manager for the company’s North American office in Barrington, IL, its system was the first hardware independent solution available on the market, meaning that the software can run on any device, regardless of vendor.

“Hardware from different manufacturers, such as Symbol, Intermec and LXE can be used, allowing our customers to select both their devices and operating systems from a competitive market, according to their specific preferences,” says Finken.

Another key differentiator is that topVOX features an open standards architecture, so it is compatible with most warehouse management systems (WMS), including SAP, MARC Global and RedPrairie, and easily integrates into these solutions. Mobile units using topSPEECH-Lydia are easily linked to the WMS as they require no middleware.

These capabilities drastically reduce start-up costs for companies that are

implementing a voice solution, as topVOX can literally work with an existing WMS as well as any hardware that may already be in use. Further, a company can choose which hardware vendors they would prefer to work with, and make decisions based on durability, price, etc.

Another plus, says Finken, is that topSPEECH-Lydia offers speaker-independent speech which eliminates the need for new workers to “train” the system to their voices, which greatly reduces the amount of time takes for the system to recognize the workers voices. For many solutions, this process can take weeks, but pickers can be up and running in a matter of minutes with topVOX.

The company developed a speaker-independent platform because, as a European vendor, it deals with a variety of languages and dialects.

In addition, workers report that they enjoy the sound of topSPEECH-Lydia’s voice. “The real, natural speech output is an important criterion for our customers because it helps to achieve a high degree of acceptance from the picking personnel,” says Finken. “It’s also easy to hear. We offer a headset called ‘NoiseMaster’ that is capable of filtering out loud, dynamic noises, like loud explosive noises over 94 db, thus increasing the speech recognition rate significantly.”

European companies such as SPAR, a supermarket retailer and Walther Alben und Rahmen, a manufacturer and distributor of photo albums, are huge fans of topSPEECH-Lydia.

“We chose topVOX because directly integrated into our SAP system,” says Wolfgang Maehr, general manager of the SPAR distribution center in Zurich, Switzerland, which implemented the solution in 2007. “We looked at a variety of systems, but we found that the quality and price of topVOX were both excellent.

Hands-free operation has been one of the biggest benefits of the solution, according to Maehr. “Our employees are handling big cases and of fruits and vegetables and its difficult to use a scanner. With topSPEECH-Lydia, they can walk and talk, so it’s more ergonomic. Our average productivity range increased 10 percent. Our accuracy also increased, so there’s no longer a check at the SPAR stores we service. We now have about one mistake in every 5,000 picks.”

The solution has enabled SPAR to take on new business. “We were able to increase the number of SKUs we carried and stores we serviced without adding any employees,” says Maehr.

Walther Alben und Rahmen also reports a great deal of success with topVOX. “We’re using voice for pick and replenishment, and this solution has proven to be more effective than their competitors,” says Oliver Jordans, general manager, Nettetal in Germany. “TopVOX was the only vendor who could work with hardware from HP, which we were already using. We wanted to buy

standard hardware and use pocket PCs—we wanted to be able to replace any hardware on our own.”

Jordans says that, since using topVOX, its picking and replenishment is 99.99 percent accurate. At receiving, the company no longer needs to do quality control. “The integration time was only four to five weeks and a huge issue for us was the noise canceling, but that proved to be no problem with topVOX.”

**To learn more about TopVOX innovative voice system solutions,
Contact Gamma Solutions on: 1 3000 GAMMA (1300 042 662) or via email
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About Gamma Solutions

Gamma Solutions Pty Ltd (www.gammasolutions.com) is an Australian owned company, based in Melbourne, with offices in Sydney, Brisbane, Adelaide and Perth. Founded in 1992, the company provides all the components of a mobile computing, RFID and data collection systems such as portable terminals, scanners, printers, wireless networks, middleware software and implementation services. Gamma Solutions is an Intermec Honours partner, a Cisco Select partner, an Oracle One partner, a Sybase mobility partner, Zebra Partnersfirst and an LXE authorised partner.

Gamma Solutions is a company committed to providing quality, practical and flexible solutions to suit the needs of its customers

About Top-VOX

A market leader in the industry, topVOX specializes in solutions for paperless picking and sorting. topSpeech-Lydia is widely used in warehousing, distribution and manufacturing facilities in Europe, South-America and the US.

Top-VOX is the manufacturer of an innovative voice system that integrates seamlessly with standard technology and makes use of a reliable speaker independent recognition system. The VOXter offers a robust speech system that supports all process in the distribution area, is continuously on-line and the only solution on the market that uses natural voice output. Depending on requirements, the wireless scanner VOXter-S can be connected using blue-tooth technology. Proven interfacing with SAP and numerous ERP systems have made top-VOX today's leader in speech technology.

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