Top Pak delivers Top Performance
using Pick-to-Light

Top Pak delivers Top Performance
using Pick-to-Light

Top performance

On a mezzanine floor within their 15.000 square metre warehouse, TopPak have a picking area in which only 60 articles are held. Those 60 articles, while only a small selection of the total SKU's, represent a massive 75% of their total daily order lines. These products are part of their online offering and are ordered by consumers across Europe. Specifically for this high intensity, limited range fulfilment operation, TopPak turned to Pcdata to provide a Pick-to-Light system of only 20 meters in length.

Since commissioning in December 2010, productivity has doubled, while the number of errors has reduced by 90%.

At TopPak , order picking is a team activity, and each of the 5 operatives engaged work dynamically across the 7 zones in perfect harmony.

How It Works

The process is sequential: The first operator launches orders and ensures a steady supply of packing boxes is kept on the gravity roller belt that runs adjacent to the pick locations. The second operator takes an empty box and rolls it in front of the picking locations within their zone. Each of the required products lights up by the means of an LED pick display and the quantity of product required is shown beside the push button light. The operative picks the required products, places them into the packing box and turns out the light of each product to confirm the pick action as complete.

Once all lights have been turned out, the operator passes the box to the operative in the next zone, who takes the box and follows the same process before passing on to the next operative and so-on. This sequential 'relay' process keeps picking distances for each operative to an absolute minimum, meaning hours are spent picking, not walking.

Order Online

The SKU's picked in this process can be ordered by consumers in nine European countries over the internet. All orders are assembled in Houten,

NL, and now part of Post-NL, they process an average of 700 orders per day with peaks hitting as high as 2500.

Optimised Picking Method

Prior to December 2010, the order assembly process was completed with the use of paper picking lists, a labour intensive and error prone method. TopPak soon identified that there had to be a faster and more accurate order assembly tool available. This resulted in the implementation of the Pcdata Pcik-to-Light system - "For this operation with relatively little article numbers and a large number of order lines is pick-to-light picking the optimal method," says Nanne van der Burg.

The 140 pick locations within the Pick-to-Light system are split over 2 levels – the upper level for item picking and the lower level for case picking. To facilitate this approach, all 60 articles have dual locations, one with open boxes and the other with ready to pick cartons. Between the two levels a Pick-to-Light rail is installed with a display for each SKU. An aluminium guide rail runs adjacent to the pick locations, allowing boxes to be effortlessly transported from one end of the picking area to the other. System installation was accomplished quickly with no operational impact: "In two days the system was intact. The pick-to-light displays of Pcdata can be installed as easily as Lego is clicked, on the rail mounted to the flow rack, after that they work immediately", Nanne van der Burg says of his experience.

More Pace, More Peace

In this part of their operation, TopPak typically use 7 operatives, who manage the process from order induction to picking through to packing and shipping boxes. Since the introduction of the Pick-to-Light system, productivity has more than doubled: "There is now much more peace in the operation," says Roland Koch, team leader of TopPak. "Previously our people walked with their index finger on the pick lists along the pick locations. This is much easier to work with".

Significant Reduction in Errors

While using paper, 10% of all orders ended up with a mistake of some kind. Not only did this have a negative impact on customer satisfaction, but to combat this problem, a quality control step had to be built into the process, to ensure that errors were correctly picked and packed.

The error rate with Pick-to-Light is now so low that a simple count of outbound boxes is the only QC step required. "Our client has agreed that we check 5% of the outbound orders. In the previous half year there we no errors found", says Roland Koch. "TopPak is extremely satisfied with the Pick-to-Light system supplied by Pcdata. It is an efficient and robust system that delivers enhanced productivity and flexibility".
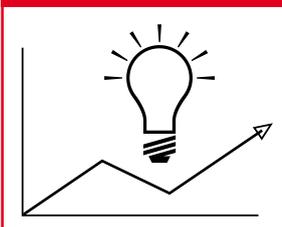
Nanne van der Burg, director of operations TopPak: "The probability of picking errors is so small that we hardly get complaints."
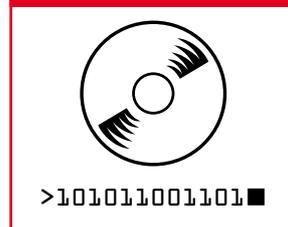
Contact information

Wiebachstraat 32
6466 NG Kerkrade
The Netherlands
Phone   +31 (0) 45 544 23 43
Fax   +31 (0) 45 544 44 24
www.pcdata.nl
sales@pcdata.nl

Brain-ware

Software

>101011001101■

Hardware

12345 00000
00000 12345
PCDATA DISTRIB