

## Associated Grocers of New England: Streamlined for Growth

*Associated Grocers of New England (AGNE), based in Manchester, N.H., is a privately held grocery wholesaler serving six New England states and parts of New York — a total of more than 450 stores. Each day AGNE ships over 50,000 full or partial cases. A high degree of accuracy and responsiveness are essential for serving AGNE's customers, who depend on rapid, correct order shipments to keep their stores stocked properly.*



### The Challenge:

Housed in an aging facility and facing a steady increase in business, AGNE found it increasingly difficult to meet customers' service demands. The co-op/wholesaler needed to update IT systems to boost accuracy, improve productivity, and increase throughput. Equally important, it needed a solution that could adapt to and support their future growth.

Improving operations was a strategic initiative for AGNE, which commits to same- or next-day delivery to customers that range from small mom-and-pop markets to supermarkets. Any solution being considered to improve AGNE's operational performance would need to adapt to changing business requirements, including scaling to larger-volume operations, in order to ensure long-term protection for AGNE's IT investment.

AGNE thoroughly investigated a variety of technology options and identified a wireless voice-directed distribution solution as the best for improving warehouse performance.

### The Solution:

AGNE selected the Vocollect voice system, which features a direct interface to its existing warehouse management system (WMS), IDS Power Warehouse™. This WMS is produced by Integrated Distribution Solutions, L.L.C. (IDS), a Vocollect partner.

AGNE converted to picking all orders with voice technology in just 3 months. The integrated solution includes IDS Power Voice™, a direct interface with the Vocollect voice-directed distribution system, and provides split- and full-case order selection in the warehouse. The IDS/Vocollect solution takes order data from IDS Power Enterprise™ and IDS Power Warehouse systems and uploads it to the wireless Vocollect Talkman® mobile computers on the floor, providing step-by-step instructions to workers through voice prompts.

The result is "hands-free, eyes-free™" order picking and other activities conducted by 60 or more workers per shift who work in the dry goods, refrigerated and frozen sections of AGNE's distribution center.

### The Result:

AGNE's integrated voice system exceeded expectations, will pay for itself in less than 18 months, and will provide significant ROI for years to come.

The integrated IDS/Vocollect voice-directed system makes it nearly impossible to select the wrong item. As a result, selection errors decreased by more than 60%. Plus, the costs previously associated with correcting errors decreased as well. Eliminating the need to audit pallets for accuracy before shipping allowed AGNE to realize additional savings and re-deploy those resources to other functions.

In addition, the seamless integration between the IDS Power Warehouse WMS and Vocollect voice system provides greater ability to monitor and manage worker performance—supporting quality assurance, customer service and other initiatives.

AGNE workers embraced the system, finding voice-directed order selection a more natural, intuitive alternative to paper-based processes, and more adaptable to worker accents and voice inflections. In fact, training time dropped by 50%, helping new hires move productively into the workforce as rapidly as possible. 🍷

*"Mis-picks have decreased by more than 60% and we're pushing more pieces out the door with the same number of people. Training is also much easier since employees are very comfortable with voice technology."*

### Arthur Heathcote

Director of IT, Customer Service, Retail Systems  
Associated Grocers of New England



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### Vocollect. Voice-Directed Distribution.

Since pioneering voice recognition for industry in 1987, Vocollect has set the standard for warehouses and other business settings. Together, its market-leading Talkman® wearable mobile computer and integrated software suite cut operating costs by eliminating errors and improving worker productivity shift after shift.

Leading WMS providers, material handling integrators and specialty voice solution providers around the world choose the performance and reliability of Vocollect to deliver integrated voice-directed distribution solutions. And every day, over 60,000 workers around the globe rely on Vocollect's integrated voice solution to help improve their operations.