

COMPANY: FOUR SEASONS PRODUCE
INDUSTRY: GLOBAL WHOLESALE DISTRIBUTION

VOICE POWERED RESULTS:

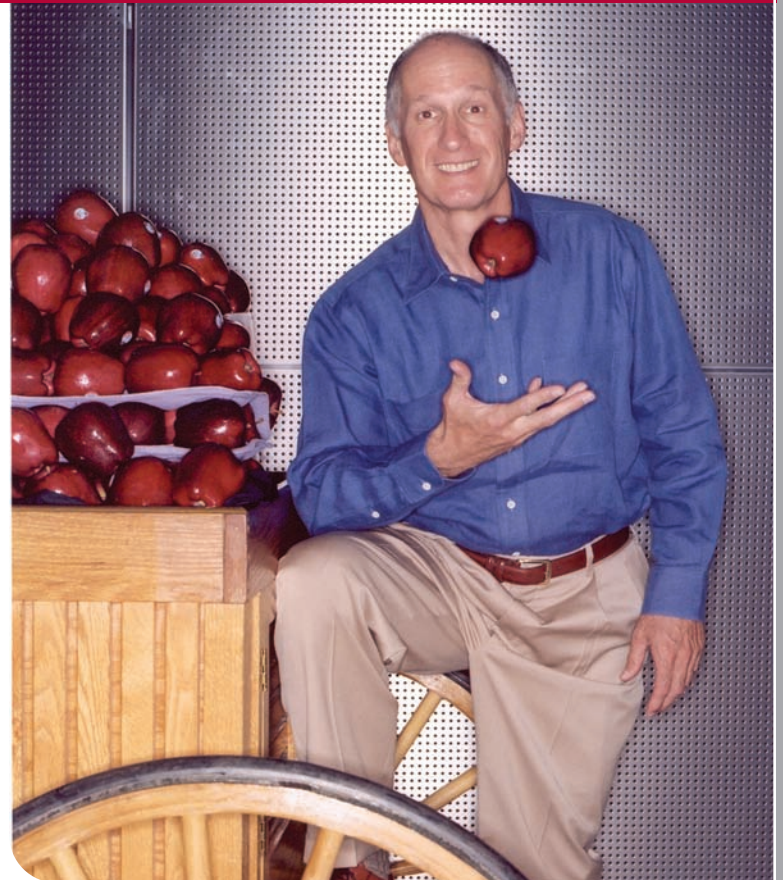
OBJECTIVE

Implement Motek and Vocollect technologies to transform paper-based operation and replace legacy labor management system with smart warehouse software™ to achieve real-time data capture, improve inventory accuracy, increase order fill rates, and raise customer service levels.

RESULTS

In 12 months:

- /// **35% increase in selector productivity.**
- /// **Mis-picks and product shorts reduced 63%.**
- /// **Achieved 99.88% shipping accuracy.**
- /// **64% reduction in inventory control labor hours.**



At Four Seasons Produce, There's More to 'Fresh Picked' Than Meets the Eye

It's always "growing season" at Four Seasons Produce. This top Pennsylvania based distributor provides quality produce, including organics, in bulk and custom packaging for domestic and export markets. They serve independent grocers, chains and the food service industry. Four Seasons delivered over 11 million cases of produce this year. At Four Seasons, there can be no compromise on quality, nothing less than the absolute freshest fruits and vegetables will do. It's simply a matter of reputation, which is why they installed Priya® Smart Warehouse Software® and voice recognition hardware from two business leaders – Motek and Vocollect.

"Most people say you should drive up volumes in order to be able to afford to automate; but the opposite is true. Once you integrate technology with your business, you can really drive up volume."

Nelson Longenecker
Vice President of Organizational Development
Four Seasons Produce

MOTEK
Smart Warehouse Software

Four Seasons Produce

The Challenge

Drive up DC volume.

Four Seasons fast-paced expansion came at a price. Over the years, the company added additional warehouses to support growth. Eventually they had five facilities – four for storage and repacking, and one for shipping. “Product for daily orders had to be pulled from multiple buildings, transferred to a central shipping warehouse, slotted, selected, and loaded onto trucks,” says Nelson Longenecker, Vice President of Organizational Development at Four Seasons Produce. “We ran into traffic delays and other problems, and were constantly under tremendous time pressure.”

To make matters worse, Four Seasons ran its distributed warehouse operation using manual processes. This meant staff tracked inventory manually by keying in every quantity received, transferred, and shipped and applying labels to every box for shipping. “With so many manual transactions taking place, we suffered from significant errors and were always one step behind the product,” says Longenecker. “It wasn’t uncommon to lose track of whole pallets, which affected service levels and ate into profits.”

While these inefficiencies are a concern in any business, they’re particularly troubling in produce where entire inventories turn every four or five days, and products are received and shipped within 24 hours of receipt. Temperature and time sensitivity must be designed into the shipping and receiving process to ensure high quality and consistently fresh produce adding another level of complexity to this mission-critical operation.

“Our service levels and sales have both grown dramatically since implementing the warehouse management system.”

Nelson Longenecker

Vice President of Organizational Development
Four Seasons Produce

The Solution

No margin for error.

Realizing technology was the only sure route to continued growth, Four Seasons management decided to consolidate into one automated distribution center. To achieve this, they turned to strategic partners Vocollect, for its Talkman® voice recognition hardware and Motek for its Smart Warehouse Software™ product, Priya.

Motek’s Priya is a Microsoft Windows®-based warehouse management system. This all-inclusive product comes with labor standards and voice recognition built in. At Four Seasons, Priya drives the Vocollect Talkman wearable computers and headsets to provide paperless “hands/eyes free” order selection. Extremely lightweight, comfortable and durable, the Talkman computers relay picking information from Priya, which is then converted into speech and transmitted to selectors through voice-recognition headsets.

With their hands free, selectors can perform work faster and more accurately. Training for this solution is simple. Even for employees unfamiliar with computers the transition to Voice-Directed picking takes place in minutes, rather than hours or days.

The relationship between Vocollect and Motek is critical because the distribution environment at Four Seasons Produce is especially challenging. With fruit and vegetable products so temperature and time sensitive, there is no margin for error. Priya and Talkman dynamically direct product ‘just-in-time’ into correct pick slots or reserve locations, to be packed and shipped to customers throughout the Middle Atlantic and Northeast states, as well as Bermuda.

The Results

Dramatic improvements in service levels and sales.

Four Seasons’ strategic partnership with Motek and Vocollect has resulted in dramatic benefits. In their state-of-the-art 262,000 sq. foot facility running Priya with voice picking, Four Seasons now leads the industry in terms of selector productivity, reduced mis-picks, ship fill levels and inventory accuracy. “Our service levels and sales have both grown dramatically since implementing the warehouse management system,” reports Longenecker.

Since implementing the new system, Four Seasons has experienced a 35% increase in selector productivity. Other key metrics include a 63% reduction in mis-picks and shorted product; a 99.88% shipping accuracy rate; a 99.60% ship fill rate and a 64% reduction in labor hours. And that’s just within the first 12 months.



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