



Each individual item scanned

In the case of manual picking, each individual item is scanned as it is placed in the order box in order to avoid errors. The ergonomic shape of the CASIO DT-X7 and the practical arrangement of the scan buttons allow both right and left-handed operators to work effortlessly at high speed.

Paperless precision picking

Pick-by-Scan at one-second intervals

Universal healthcare is an active and challenging field. Pharmaceutical wholesalers striving for success in this market must deliver exceptional service. Würzburg-based wholesaler Ebert+Jacobi has made further investments in the optimisation of its logistics processes to ensure its customers benefit from faster and - to the greatest extent possible - error-free delivery of often vital pharmaceutical products.

Alongside the latest picking machines, which deal with around 50% of all order items, up to 40 employees pick another 35,000 lines in a paperless process using handheld scanner terminals. With an error rate of just 0.06%, the pickers' work is virtually error-free, as they scan each item individually.

Pharmaceutical wholesaler Ebert+Jacobi GmbH & Co. KG is a private, independent company that has established itself over several generations as a reliable and dependable partner to its market and business partners. A total of 740 employees at the headquarters in the German city of Würzburg and five further sites across Central and Southern Germany process up to 140,000 order lines from around 2,800 pharmacies each day and provide a reliable service supplying the regions with often vital pharmaceutical products. More than 80,000 different items are held permanently in stock, a figure that rises to in excess of 120,000 items if you include the company's field warehouses. To stay true to its motto „Closer and further ahead“, Ebert+Jacobi constantly invests in its logistics and uses innovative technologies to develop new solutions to further optimise its business processes.

The company's use of state-of-the-art system solu-

Customer:	Ebert+Jacobi GmbH & Co. KG Pharmazeutische Großhandlung D-97076 Würzburg, Germany - www.ebert-jacobi.de
Industry:	Pharmaceutical wholesale
Application:	Paperless picking
Products:	Handheld terminals: CASIO DT-X7 Software: IBM terminal emulation
Partner:	Dataident GmbH D-21218 Seevetal, Germany - www.dataident.de



Handheld terminals indicate potential errors

During the picking process, each individual item is scanned before it is placed in the order box. If the IT system detects that an item number does not match the order, the employee is alerted to this fact by a screen outlined in red.

tions is clearly apparent on entering one of their warehouses. Fully automated picking systems fill the order containers travelling along the conveyor belts with the ordered pharmaceutical products. However, only the fast or medium-moving items - which account for around 50% of the products - are picked fully automatically. For the other half, this process is not cost-effective, as it would require very high levels of investment in technology. In the other warehouse areas, the „slower-moving“ pharmaceutical products are therefore picked manually instead.

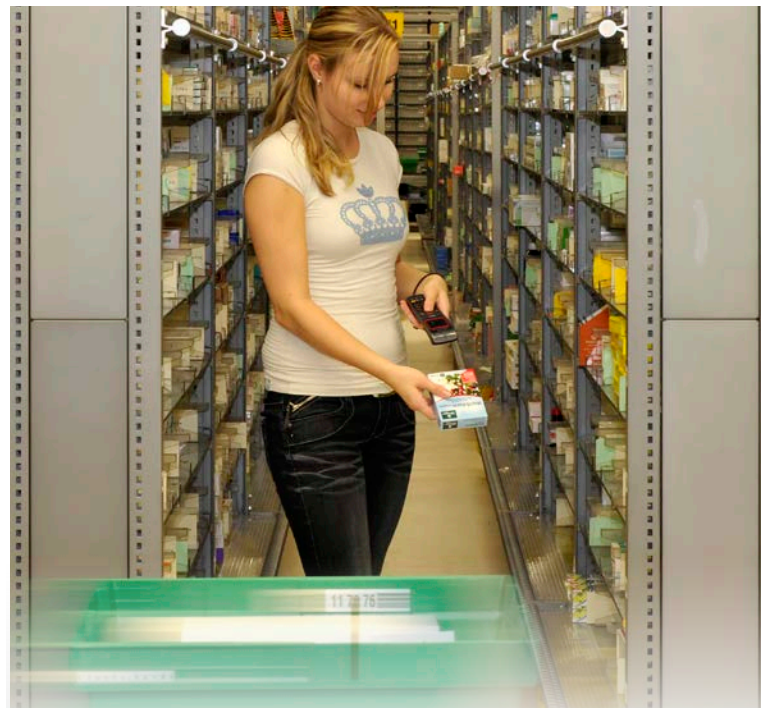
„Prior to the introduction of mobile data terminals, we picked orders in the conventional way using paper picking slips and achieved a very low error rate in doing so“, explains plant manager Matthias Popp. „However, flawless quality management is extremely important to us as a certified company, and so we looked into optimising the manual picking process further. Our objective was to get the error rate as close to zero as possible, while at the same time improving efficiency.“

Solution: mobile scanner terminals

The initial momentum for modernising the manual picking area came from subsidiary Ebert+Jacobi Finze in the German city of Pfreimd, where additional checks on orders following picking had been introduced to further reduce the error rate. However, these additional checks resulted in relatively high personnel costs. The management team therefore decided to invest in modern technology for the manual picking process.

In the search for the best solution, the company looked at various technologies and assessed their suitability for picking pharmaceutical products. Additional automated picking machines were ruled out as these are only cost-effective for fast-moving products. A pick-by-voice system promised the desired reduction in error rate, but proved impractical as the required voice communication would have slowed down the high pick speed. A pick-by-light system was another conceivable option, but this would have required an uneconomically high level of technical outlay given the exceptionally high variety of products in the pharmaceutical wholesale industry. This left mobile data capture using pick-by-scan in the form of handheld terminals communicating directly with the enterprise resource planning system.

The planning and implementation of the project was entrusted to Dataldent GmbH. The mobile data capture specialists presented the company with various handheld terminals from a number of different manufacturers, set out the different features of the devices, and highlighted the lightweight DT-X7 handheld terminal from CASIO with its high-speed scanner and large colour display. The well-designed housing with its slightly downward-facing scanner head and the arrangement of the non-slip scan buttons promised user-friendly operation. Field testing in the picking area demonstrated that the CASIO DT-X7 supports extremely quick and convenient data capture for employ-



Picking errors virtually ruled out

Once the order items have been picked within a picking area, the container ID number is scanned using the CASIO handheld terminal. This ensures that the right items are placed in the correct quantity in the designated shipping box.



Ergonomic shape of the CASIO DT-X7 well-received by employees

The curved design of the handheld terminal with its downward-facing barcode scanner and the lightweight construction of the device are particularly popular among employees and have increased acceptance of the new picking system.

years during picking. The field tests also revealed that the barcode scanner boasts a very high read quality, meaning that even pale labels can be read quickly and without any problems. „An additional requirement relating to the scanner terminals was ease of use, with few buttons. In addition, the display needed to offer high contrast in all light conditions and be easy to read. The CASIO devices fulfil all these requirements to the complete satisfaction of our customer“, explains Andreas Schapperer, head of the South branch of Daltalent GmbH.

In-house commissioning

At the request of Ebert+Jacobi's IT department, Daltalent equipped the handheld terminals with IBM terminal emulation and preconfigured them for picking. At the same time, the IT department configured its own enterprise resource planning system for online operation with the mobile terminals and prepared the application. Following delivery of the terminals and the hardware for the WLAN, Ebert+Jacobi installed and commissioned the preconfigured devices in-house without any problems. During this project phase, three Ebert+Jacobi sites were equipped with a total of 120 scanner terminals.

Seamless introduction

Acceptance of the new solution among the pickers was very high right from the outset because the new technology was introduced gradually and made their work considerably easier. And before long, they even came up with suggestions for improving communication with the ERP system. „Our pickers are guided by the ERP system via the handheld terminals and the fail-safe picking process even saves time, so our employees are very satisfied.“ Other departments are benefiting from the quality of the pick-by-scan system too. As fewer deliveries contain errors, the customer service department's workload has fallen and there are fewer returns. „Our main concern, increasing customer satisfaction, has been supported by the introduction of paperless picking,“ emphasises Ralph-Dieter Schüller, Managing Partner of Ebert+Jacobi.

Hilmar Scheller, Managing Director, Ebert+Jacobi



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