

WAVELINK CASE STUDY: SPEAKEASY IN THE REAL WORLD



THE CUSTOMER

An existing Wavelink customer who has been using Avalanche Mobility Center and Wavelink Terminal Emulation for several years recently wanted to further improve their warehouse productivity and efficiency. The existing environment consisted of one warehouse with three different sections that all shipped supplies, which are picked from various bins. Workers received a bin location and quantity on their handheld mobile device, and then sought out the correct location and placed the items into a receptacle, which is then sent along for processing before shipment.

THE PROBLEM

With this system, there was obvious room to increase productivity and efficiency by streamlining the picking process, which in turn would also make the company more competitive in the marketplace. The process of looking down at the device display screen for each new bin assignment, then looking up to locate it in the warehouse, then arriving at the location and then needing to read the display screen again for the pick quantity, was highly cumbersome for workers. Additionally, once they picked the quantity, they had to enter the pick via the device keyboard. While the pick was now entered, it sometimes meant that the entry contained an incorrect value. It also put the worker at an increased safety risk due to the attention being paid to the device, and not their surroundings. Over the years, the company had made upgrades to this system in order to maximize performance, but was beginning to realize that there was little room for additional improvement. The company saw that their best opportunity for continued growth and productivity was not in making continued upgrades to the existing system, but to introduce a hands and eyes-free voice-enabled solution that further maximized potential.

Before the company began evaluating voice solutions, they established some parameters that needed to be met by the selected solution. The biggest parameter was that the company had just invested in new hardware across most of their enterprise, and it would not make financial or business sense to scrap newer mobile devices for a solution that required new proprietary hardware. However, they also deployed many devices that had been in use for several years, and so the chosen voice solution also needed to work on a variety of device manufacturers. Secondly, due to the variety of environments throughout the three sections of the warehouse, the solution would need to provide a level of flexibility to work in each. For example, some sections required different variations on equipment to meet specific job duties and user preferences. These equipment variations meant anything from the need to use a combination of barcode scanners and voice input (multi-modal support), to different headset requirements.

THE RESULTS / FUTURE PLANS ►

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◀ THE CUSTOMER / THE PROBLEM / THE SOLUTION

THE SOLUTION

When the company began looking at the available options in the voice field, it was clear that Wavelink Speakeasy was the only available solution that could meet their requirements. No other reputable solutions could match Speakeasy's ability to work on the company's existing devices and offer the breadth of user flexibility that Speakeasy could. The cost to completely implement new proprietary hardware would have been cost prohibitive and would prolong any expected return on investment. Speakeasy also provided several other key features, such as speaker-independent voice input (does not need to be trained to recognize one specific voice). Instead, it understands a variety of different tones, accents and dialects. This was important, due to the diverse workforce that the company employed.

The company was also impressed with the fact that, in addition to being a device agnostic solution, it was also largely accessory agnostic. This was significant because throughout the three different warehouse sections, different headsets and/or user preferences needed to be accommodated for. For example, one section required headsets that were a bit more ruggedized because the supplies needed to be kept at extreme temperatures. A headset used in a more normal temperature simply wouldn't work in such environments, and the fact that Speakeasy allowed for these variances was pivotal. Multi-modal support was also important, as some of the warehouse sections needed to use voice 100% of the time, while others needed to mix voice with handheld scanners, printers, etc. Competing products didn't allow for this combination of traditional warehouse tools and voice support, as they require the customer to run 100% voice applications or none at all.

Speakeasy also didn't require the company to add additional servers to run the voice application. Because of Speakeasy's 100% client-side processing, the company could further maximize their existing infrastructure and still get the benefits of reduced network traffic over the wireless LAN. Additionally, since the company was already an existing Wavelink Avalanche customer, they were able to take advantage of one of the most dynamic features available on the market. By using Avalanche and Speakeasy together, the company was able to easily manage the entire ecosystem from a central console. This is handy when they need to update specific grammar files, whether it's to a few devices or all of them at once. Avalanche also provides a diagnostic feature set that allows them to troubleshoot devices without needing to send an IT specialist on to the floor for repairs. The company estimates that they've cut their troubleshooting costs by 30% with this feature.

THE RESULTS

Since the deployment of Wavelink Speakeasy, the company has seen dramatic results in improved productivity, efficiency, accuracy and training that have increased the company's competitive edge. Worker productivity is up across the board with a high of 17% improvement, and a low of 10% improvement. This mainly lies in the fact that workers no longer have to spend time in between picks looking at their device for the next bin location and quantity. Workers are now completely free to use both hands and eyes and can complete multiple assignments simultaneously, making them more efficient and safer. Accuracy is also up almost 15%, due to the fact that speech input is nearly 100% accurate, as compared to the 80-90% accuracy of manual entry. Speakeasy will also save the company money in training costs as they take on new employees because of the rapid training associated with Speakeasy. What used to take several days of training is now accomplished in about a 20-30 minute training session.

FUTURE PLANS

Overall, it was the fact that Wavelink's solution worked with their existing ecosystem and still offered all the benefits of a voice solution, that led the company to choose Speakeasy. Compared to other solutions, it simply offered less upfront costs and expenses which meant that they would see a quicker initial return on investment. After the complete implementation, the company says it expects to see a complete return on their investment in about five months and will continue to expand its deployment of voice throughout all of the company's regional warehouses.

The Industry Leader

Since 1992, Wavelink has been the leading provider of multi-vendor mobile application development and mobile device and infrastructure management software. Wavelink's technology solves the unique challenges involved in deploying, managing and controlling today's enterprise mobility systems, and facilitates peak performance from frontline staff. Over 10,000 companies in the retail, manufacturing, government and logistics industries rely on Wavelink to accelerate application delivery, reduce device management and support costs, and tighten network security.

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