



WAREHOUSING CASE STUDY: Wilec

Maintaining stock accuracy, correct picking, timely dispatch and on-time delivery are daily challenges for the warehousing and storage industry and crucial to ensuring that the right product is delivered to the customer on time, which is why Johannesburg-based transformer-insulation product manufacturer and distributor Wilec is streamlining its operations, yielding faster picking rates and achieving accurate dispatches, owing to a new automated warehouse management system, TransLution™.

Wilec is constantly expanding and upgrading its product range to meet the challenges of a dynamic market and, with over 6 000 products on offer, well-organised warehouse management is essential to maintaining service excellence.

“We wanted stronger controls when handling copper product and improved control over inventory, dispatching and work in progress,” says Wilec SYSPRO administrator **Varshan Mahabel**, adding that, this was why TransLution was deployed to assist.

How TransLution™ Works

TransLution is a warehouse management tool that uses barcode labels, hand-held radio-frequency scanners and touchscreen terminals to record and track the movement of every product in a factory or warehouse environment.

Data is captured through simple interface scanners during each step of the workflow process. TransLution™ relays this information to the company’s enterprise resource planning (ERP) software in real time – live reporting that allows for immediate changes on the line. Errors are reduced and the company benefits from active monitoring of daily operations.

Warehouse Management Functionality

At Wilec, each copper coil produced gets a two-dimensional barcode with the product type and weight, explains TransLution™ consultant for AfriSoft Africa Rene Pattle.

“When the barcode is scanned, the system records when an order is issued and the time it is picked up. It then validates the products being picked against the order requirements, monitors how long it takes to complete an order and when it is ready for dispatch. This data is relayed in real time and the system is set up to validate and respond to incoming data as needed,” says Pattle.

The software has also been optimised to monitor and report on employee performance and productivity in the warehouse – a valuable human resources tool. This data assists management in identifying and rewarding top performers, as well as addressing road blocks to improved workflow or slow performance.

Implementation and Customisation

Wilec’s in-house information technology team took full advantage of TransLution™’s customisable system during implementation. “Deploying TransLution™ was a straightforward process. The system was then optimised according to the functionality we most needed. We opted to integrate TransLution™ with our existing ERP system, SYSPRO, to provide users with one system to work with,” reports Mahabel.

The team customised the system to do dispatch tracking that allows for the dispatch clerk to view and process transactions from the scanners in real time. “This gives users a one-stop shop to monitor and control dispatches;” adds Mahabel.

Another customisation provides real-time stock accuracy for stock counts and monthly cycle counts, where the system closely monitors the most ordered product codes on the system.

System Benefits

“The entire order-to-delivery process is now monitored and this provides valuable data that we did not have before. As a data-driven company, we are exploiting the ability to analyse ever-more detailed data available from the TransLution™ system – it assists in identifying bottlenecks, is an invaluable tool in project meetings, assists decision making and gives the executive team improved visibility of activity within the Wilec environment;” states Mahabel.

This data is being used to change the mind-set of the warehouse staff as shortfalls are addressed quickly. Accuracy of items being picked, as well as on-time delivery has improved at branches. Since implementing the warehouse management system, Wilec has picked and dispatched 13,000 orders nationally.

The next step will be to integrate the TransLution Quality Control system into SYSPRO, which will improve the speed of our Quality Control testing process.



About

Wilec, a technical solutions provider and a division of the large industrial group ACTOM (Pty) Ltd, was established in 1953 and consists of two operating divisions: “Electrical” and “Industrial”. Wilec manufactures and supplies input materials for the electrical motor, transformer repair and manufacturing industries. Its head office and main distribution centre is based in Johannesburg’s City Deep, with additional stock distribution centres in Durban, Cape Town, Pietermaritzburg and Middelburg. The conductor manufacturing facility is located in Olifantsfontein, Gauteng.

AfriSoft Africa provides, implements and supports advanced, customised technology solutions for the complex requirements of agribusiness, manufacturing, warehousing and distribution companies. AfriSoft offers their clients practical, simple to use software and systems that integrate financial information with business operations resulting in measurable business improvements: efficiency, data accuracy, business control and access to business information.

TransLution™ Software makes managing complex production processes in manufacturing and warehousing companies simple. TransLution™ Software uses barcode scanners, touch-screen computers, direct integration to scales, flow meters, analytical testing equipment and other plant equipment to gather your manufacturing and warehouse information easily and efficiently.

TransLution™ Software is implemented, customised and supported by AfriSoft Africa and is available in Africa, the UK and Europe and coming soon in N. America and Australia. www.translutionsoftware.com.