



Millamed

Malaga, Spain

115

INCREASING PRODUCTIVITY

The new system will handle in just one day what it previously took a week to achieve.

CONSULTANCY APPROACH

SDI's unique consultancy approach has resulted in a solution that is future-proof, being able to meet the future outputs needed, and other precise needs of the customer.

AUTOMATED SOLUTION

Upgrading to an automated system has helped allow the steady increase of productivity, by making the loading and storage of garments more efficient.



THE CHALLENGE

To cope with annual growth of more than 30 per cent per year in sale of its Charanga brand of children's clothing, Millamed needed to speed-up order processing at its new 12,000 sq m centre, to which the company has recently moved having outgrown its old 2,000 sq m facility.

Orders were being assembled manually for each of its 168 outlets in Spain, Portugal, the Middle East and South America, and the company was only able to complete two full picks each week. The company was also struggling to fulfil orders from its Factory Outlet branches, through which the previous year's Charanga ranges are sold.

THE SOLUTION

SDI's automated sorter solved Millamed's existing supply chain issues, whilst providing the capacity to cope with anticipated expansion over the next few years. The sortation system is now handling two full picking waves each day for the Charanga stores, as well as a single complete pick for the Factory Outlets.

With sustained growth of more than 30 per cent per annum Millamed expects to increase its number of outlets from 132 to more than 270 within the next two years. At the moment SDI sortation system is operating for up to five hours each day, processing around 9,000 items. However, the maximum capacity of the solution is much higher, designed to handle more than 7,000 items per hour.

THE SYSTEM

SDI's sorter comprises a 43 metre-long carousel, installed on steel framework 3.5m above floor level. Travelling round inside the carousel are 118 sets of steel trays with hinged twin base flaps – 'bomb bays'. Arranged around the carousel beneath the rotating trays are 100 'drop stations'.

The sorter is used to handle flat garments, packed in plastic bags, which comprise around 60 per cent of the items despatched from the Malaga centre. As daily orders are received from the Charanga outlets, the items are assembled from stock in batches, by product, size and colour rather than by individual store order, as was the case previously. The items are picked onto pallets that are then lifted up to the induct stations on the sorter. There are two induct platforms, each equipped with barcode scanners (the goods arrive from the suppliers with bar code labels already printed) and then place the items on to trays – with their bar codes uppermost so they can be read by in-line scanners above the carousel.

Control software on the sorter, written by SDI's sister company RTI, interfaces with Millamed's warehouse management/order processing system (WMS). For each sortation wave system assigns specific drop stations on the sorter to individual stores. As the trays rotate round the carousel, the control software activates the bomb-bay flaps so that the items are released at the required drop station, where they are

deposited into boxes.

When each store order has been completed a blue light comes on at the relevant drop station – giving operators an easy at-a-glance view of how the sortation process is progressing.

At the touch of a button, printers located by the sorter and also linked in to Millamed's WMS produce labels for each store order. The labels indicate the destination store, the contents of the order and the drop stations at which the boxed orders are waiting. Operators, working at floor level inside the carousel loop apply the labels to the boxes at the drop stations. The boxes are closed and then pushed outwards onto gravity roller conveyor lanes that lead from the drop stations. Boxed store orders accumulate on the conveyors.

The operator presses a button above the drop zone to confirm that's the label has been applied and the box has been transferred to the accumulation conveyor, making the drop zone available for the next sortation wave. SDI has installed short conveyor lanes for small-quantity orders, longer conveyors for larger orders. Long or short conveyors, and the drop stations to which they are connected, are automatically assigned by the WMS depending on the size of each store order at each sortation wave. The boxes are collected from the accumulation conveyors and transferred to despatch for onward delivery to the stores.

“This not only give us the ability to handle much high volumes – in terms of qualities and numbers of Storage keeping units – but it can also enable us to improve services to the outlets even further.”

IT Director Antonio Camas Rodriguez

ABOUT SDI GROUP

SDI group is an innovative provider of systems and solutions to the retail, wholesale, fulfilment and e-commerce industries for all aspects of distribution centre materials handling.

As both consultants and system integrators, the company provides clients with a total logistics solution package, which includes materials handling consulting, as well as design, engineering, fabrication, installation and integration services.



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