

FOCUSED ON GROWTH, CASEY'S GENERAL STORE SLASHES COSTS, INCREASES PRODUCTIVITY



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— Bill Brauer,
Distribution Center
Manager

Casey's General Store is the fourth-largest convenience store chain in the U.S., with headquarters in Ankeny, Iowa, and more than 1,950 locations across the Midwest. The company has seen steady and profitable growth by controlling aspects of its operations that other convenience chains outsource, including fresh food preparation.

Most Casey's stores have a kitchen where employees prepare freshly made sandwiches, donuts, salads and pizzas. In fact, Casey's is the fifth-largest pizza chain* in the U.S., selling more than 19 million made-from-scratch pizzas per year.

The company also prefers to control its distribution process, delivering approximately 90 percent of its in-store products from two regional distribution centers (DCs) to ensure lower costs, product consistency and tighter control of scheduling.

Fueling Growth with Efficiency and Savings

Like all leading organizations, Casey's is committed to continual optimization, reviewing standard processes to drive out wasted steps, minimize expenses and ensure competitive advantage.

According to Bill Brauer, distribution center manager at Casey's Ankeny DC, "It's crucial that our stores receive what they want, when they want it. And of course, we want to make sure orders get filled as accurately and efficiently as possible."

The company had recently implemented a warehouse management system, then purchased new RF and voice-picking equipment. However, while the new devices were improving productivity and efficiency, it became clear that managing them was still a complex, labor-intensive process.





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— Chris Muhlbauer,
Shift Supervisor

Plenty of Readers, But Not Enough to Go Around

RF readers were stored on open shelves in a central room of the 450,000-square-foot facility. Employees would start each shift by making the long trek across the building to pick up a device, which could take up to 15 minutes a day. Devices were stored on open shelves and available “first-come, first-served.” However, employees at the back of the line would often come up empty handed – even though Casey’s kept approximately 20 extra devices on hand.

The company was struggling with a common problem – employees had little accountability for those critically important RF readers and voice picking equipment. Therefore, they were sometimes careless or forgetful, and simply didn’t worry about returning equipment after their shifts. They might leave an RF device on the truck they were operating, or set it down on a pallet and forget it. This left a trail of lost, uncharged and broken equipment throughout the warehouse. And it became a significant problem for supervisors.

Lost Devices Meant Lost Productivity

Shift supervisor Chris Muhlbauer said, “Employees would come in to start their day and find all the chargers empty. Then they’d come to us, and we’d spend from 15 to 30 minutes looking for them, three or four days a week.” In the meantime, employees would be idle, waiting for their supervisor to find working equipment for them.

Another consequence of this problem: frequent repairs and high replacement costs. According to Sally Vetter, Vocollect administrator, “We were buying 4 to 5 new devices each quarter, so we knew we had a problem we needed to address.”

Taking Back Control

Casey’s General Store began exploring options for managing high-cost handheld assets, and learned about Apex AXCESS™ Automated Locker Solutions. Working with the team at Apex, Casey’s soon implemented six AXCESS locker systems to manage its 180 RF readers and voice-picking equipment.

The secure lockers provide 24/7 visibility of usage data through their Trajectory Cloud™ platform. Casey’s installed the lockers in three areas, close to employee entrances and time clocks, to streamline shift starts and reduce crowding.



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— Tom Chase,
Shift Supervisor

A Stronger Sense of Accountability

Although some employees were hesitant about learning a new system, they quickly saw the benefits. “Everyone’s getting to work quicker because they can get their RF gun quicker. They go right to their locker, scan their card, punch in three numbers and they get it,” said Tom Chase, shift supervisor.

Returning devices at the end of the shift is just as fast. And they are being returned – without exception. After all, employees know that someone else will be using that device on the next shift, and they’ll be using it themselves the next day.

“For me, the biggest result was we’re getting more accountability,” said Chase. “If something gets broken, we can easily check Trajectory to know who used it, so we can ask how it got broken.”



Voice-picking and RF equipment is now returned on time for faster shift starts.

REAL RESULTS

Lower Costs and Increased Productivity

16,438 
EMPLOYEE HOURS RECOVERED
» 15 min/day walk time x 263 employees

563 
SUPERVISOR HOURS RECOVERED
» 11.25 search hours/week x 3 supervisors

\$300,000+ 
EMPLOYEE WAGES REALLOCATED

\$42,000+ 
RF INVENTORY SAVINGS



A 40% Decrease in Repairs

The new emphasis on accountability quickly led to a sharp decrease in service and backup device costs.

Once employees were assigned to a specific device (usually shared across 2 to 3 shifts,) Casey's no longer needed as many backup devices, which allowed it to reduce its RF handheld inventory by roughly 20 devices. But even more startling was the drop in repairs.

"We reduced repairs on all devices by roughly 40 percent. That was a big ROI in itself. Not to mention, all the units we were losing prior to getting the lockers. And we got the accountability we were looking for," said Brauer.

More Control to Power Future Growth

Just as closely controlling its operations has played a key role in Casey's growth, its new AXCESS Automated Locker Solution will help power future growth by ensuring lean, efficient productivity in their DC, and fast, accurate order deliveries to their stores. In fact, the Ankeny DC has seen so much value in its new lockers that they've purchased an additional AXCESS locker system for controlling devices in the freezer area.

40%
REDUCTION
» Device Repairs



Since devices are now returned on time with less damage, Casey's can recover more than 16,000 employee hours per year.

To learn more about handheld device management from Apex Supply Chain Technologies®, visit ApexSupplyChain.com/AssetManagement, email us at info@apexsupplychain.com, or call 1.800.229.7912 to visit our Customer Experience Center.

Technology That **Counts**™



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