

Benchmark Briefing

Accuracy in Pharmaceuticals





Managing growth efficiently

Automation improves the efficiency of pharmaceutical development & production by streamlining and optimizing processes. Pharmacy dispensing and online models have to adapt to a different model as they continue to provide essential healthcare and services to patients. What does the modern pharmacy look like?

Introducing Church Pharmacy who use automation to reduce errors, costs and wait times and enable pharmacists to concentrate on providing accurate services. The award-winning pharmaceutical supplier for clinics and hospitals in the United Kingdom was growing fast and needed to rethink operations to keep pace. For Church Pharmacy accuracy is at the forefront and customer service is a top priority. It was time to improve overall picking processes and optimize space with the challenge of implementing the changes while staying in the same location.

Working with Kardex, Church Pharmacy transitioned its facility to a modern warehouse with significant improvements such as increasing batch speeds and reducing staff training. The teams focused on accuracy and compliance to implement a fully-integrated intralogistics solution. By implementing automation, Church Pharmacy added space and increased efficiencies across its business.

Case at a glance

Site

Church Pharmacy, Loughborough, Leicestershire, United Kingdom

Application

Storage, order fulfillment, stock management, Kardex Power Pick System integration

Equipment

One Vertical Buffer Module (VBM) Kardex Miniload-in-a-Box* with a turntable access opening at the front and replenishment access on the side. Three Kardex Frame Pick Systems (pick-by-light), Kardex Power Pick System warehouse management software, laser pointer.

* formerly Kardex Compact Buffer

Increase
accuracy
to 99.9%

Increase
picking speeds
by 70%

Increase
floor space
by 300%



Automation is the solution

The Church Pharmacy and UpSTEAM.uk teams came together to find the right solution. Recognizing that although space was important, the focus also needed to be on accuracy and productivity. It was clear the best approach for the business was an automated solution and one that was flexible in adapting to complex business processes in a modular fashion. The team chose the VBM and Kardex Frame Pick system as the top match for Church Pharmacy's needs.

The solution offered the capability to have more than one access point for replenishment and retrieval and a laser pointer to easily identify the location of each pick. One major benefit of the VBM is it provides greater flexibility for individual order fulfillment. Additionally, the solution features a turntable, designed for fast order picking. The turntable sits at the front ensuring the next pick is ready in advance.

The VBM's modular design with its small but secure footprint, allows for scalability whilst being able to work alongside other software and hardware solutions, such as the Kardex Frame Pick System. Church Pharmacy was able to stay at its current premises thanks to the Kardex system's ability to store a significant amount of stock in a small footprint.

Main challenges

Church Pharmacy, one of the largest suppliers of medical aesthetics and pharmaceutical products to healthcare professionals in the United Kingdom, was growing faster than its warehouse could manage. The demands on staff and the incumbent storage infrastructure were becoming potential issues. A high-spec warehouse designed to promote cleanliness and safety meant that they needed to optimize the warehouse rather than move to larger premises.

Working with the technical team at UpSTEAM.uk, Church Pharmacy analyzed its business processes. An automated solution was required to utilize storage space, improve accuracy at the pick process stage and enable staff to dispense correctly picked products, whilst reducing search time/effort. A capacity for scaling-up and ensuring compliance so that the day-to-day customer service was not affected was also a priority.



1 Vertical Buffer Module Kardex Miniload-in-a-Box
W: 10,756 mm | D: 2,450 mm | H: 5,900 mm



3 Kardex Frame Pick Systems × 3 (36 locations)



Kardex Power Pick System warehouse management software

Accuracy is a must

In the pharmaceutical industry, dispatching the incorrect medication can cause significant risks, making accuracy a main driver. With the VBM, accuracy currently sits at 99.9%. This has made a big difference increasing the team's confidence when picking the correct item to be presented to the pharmacist for the final accuracy check. The pharmacist can now focus more on the clinical patient checks. By eliminating manual picking, the VBM has significantly increased accuracy for Church Pharmacy.

Combining speed with ergonomics

In the past, the manual process meant that the picking team would walk around the warehouse to locate stock for an order. This was then handed to the pharmacists to make sure the items were correct prior to packing/sending. The VBM delivers the exact product required to the picker, meeting the need for more ergonomic working conditions. It also offers the ability to have more than one access point for replenishment and retrieval and a laser pointer to easily identify the location of the pick.

The VBM in combination with the Kardex Frame Pick System means time spent picking has been reduced from approximately 24-man hours a day to 6 hours, resulting in a 75% savings in time whilst improving picking accuracy.

« Since the VBM was installed, our staff are more confident in their work and new starters are trained within a week. They no longer need to learn and remember so much regarding all the products. They just need to be able to count, pick and put.»

Georgy Paul, Inventory Manager, Church Pharmacy

Kardex Frame Pick System for batch picking

The team added the Kardex Frame Pick System to provide an even higher level of flexibility, especially when Church Pharmacy requires additional labor during higher order volumes. The Kardex Frame Pick solution can pick up to a batch of 36 orders simultaneously.

Optical indicators such as pick-to-light and put-to-light direct the operators to the exact location of the pick or put - increasing accuracy and reducing the number of pick errors. As the frame sits 1.5 meters opposite the VBM terminal where products are being presented, the walking distance between the presentations and orders dramatically decreased.

The single terminal used for batch picking presentations reduces the amount of walking and increases the size of the batches that can be picked using a frame.



Smart software brings it together

The Kardex Power Pick System navigates the orders through part of the fulfillment process. The Kardex Power Pick System also facilitates the batch picking which enables Church Pharmacy's staff to fulfill multiple orders at the same time. The storage rules allow for maximum volume to be utilized whilst also allowing to batch pick from static racking. Each material can also be customized by using features such as lot, expiry, serialization and kit.

The Kardex Power Pick System software integrated with the flexible Batch-Master3000 batching and fulfillment tool designed by UpSTEAM.uk helps increase picking speeds and efficiency by another 35 – 40% which ensures all stocked items are delivered on-time, in prioritized order, for efficient picking whilst delivering a tailored solution based on the material process and fulfillment flow.

When required, the Kardex Power Pick System communicates with various peripheral devices such as bar code scanners, batch lights, laser light pointers, printers, etc.

Installation = business as usual

It took a matter of 6 weeks to have everything fully operational, including the software installation, but as with any installation there are always teething issues that occur. These were mitigated by ensuring that the Kardex and UpSTEAM.uk teams worked closely together to ensure the launch of each phase, taking into account, the importance of business continuity of order processing. Kardex worked with Church Pharmacy to make sure the project was completed to their satisfaction.

"We are 100% satisfied with the Kardex and UpSTEAM.uk teams. They were super responsive in all our queries and allowed us to scale-up faster than imagined. We have built a great relationship with them. Our confidence in them grew even stronger because of their after-sales support and we are now at a point of looking at the next fulfillment and inventory project with Kardex and UpSTEAM.uk". Shabbir Bhojani, Director, Church Pharmacy.

Exceeding expectations

An unforeseen benefit was in regards to training. Normally staff would require a minimum training of one month on the goods in and picking processes. Now staff are trained within a week. Being able to stay in its high-spec warehouse has delivered significant savings and Church Pharmacy predicts an ROI in less than 2 years. The Kardex Power Pick System now manages Church Pharmacy's multiple pharmacy branches and warehouses including its racked and refrigerated stock.

"It's amazing when we look at what we have achieved in a relatively short time. We have increased their accuracy, and productivity. The staff are happier, and their customers can be assured of continued great service." Joseph Stephen, Head Software Architect, UpSTEAM.uk.

The future

Work processes in the warehouse and production area have now been optimized by using the Kardex VBM. Retrieval and picking times are cut and inventory accuracy has significantly improved. The VBM will deliver a secure long-term investment thanks to its high flexibility, modularity, and scalability with the capacity to grow 5x the current space requirements.

«We have a big vision for the way we work, its a growing market and we need to continue delivering the best possible service to our customers, the industry and to create excellency in our field.»

Danny Chavda, Systems and Innovations, UpSTEAM.uk

About Church Pharmacy

With branches in Central London and the Midlands, Church Pharmacy is one of the largest suppliers of medical aesthetics and pharmaceutical products to healthcare professionals in the UK. To date they supply over 3,000 SKU's across their product database.

Church Pharmacy prides itself on being an award-winning pharmaceutical supplier and customer service provider, right from the beginning of a prescription order through until delivery for a seamless experience to clinics and hospitals. The main priority for the team is being able to continue to innovate and offer unparalleled customer services.

About UpSTEAM.uk

UpSTEAM.uk was created due to an increase in demand from businesses to update their systems for smoother operations whilst staying relevant.

The company takes a personal, in-depth approach to the understanding and fulfillment of their clients' visions. UpSTEAM.uk analyzes their clients' existing processes and designs a solution in line with their business model. They work with their clients and other third-party providers to transform the vision into reality.

UpSTEAM.uk has experience in working within highly regulated and complex industries, such as pharma and logistics. At the forefront of the solutions, they offer are; security, accuracy, modularity, scalability and staff wellness. A team of business and solution analysts, system architects, project managers, designers, developers and more makes UpSTEAM.uk a force that drives the future.

About Kardex

Kardex is a global industry partner offering customized intralogistics solutions for individual requirements across various industries. Based on decades of working with small to large-scale businesses in every corner of the globe, Kardex has seen first-hand how every industry has its own unique challenges and demands when it comes to warehouse and plant operations.