

TOOLING UP

Draper Tools is 101 years old this year - and investing in automation to support the continuing growth of its business

Draper Tools, a leading hand and power tool distributor is a family-run company that has been in business for just over a century and has more than 5,000 UK and overseas customers. Historically its customers have been mostly business-to-business (B2B) retailers and distributors but more recently Draper has also begun using its logistics platform to ship to consumers directly on behalf of its customers.

Draper Tools has been implementing a strategy that upgrades and modernises its warehousing and logistics workflows with enabling technology. Draper Head of Warehousing and Logistics, Matt Boschi is leading that process supported by Draper Tools technology partner Red Ledge. He is responsible for Draper Tools' two-site, 560,000 square feet warehousing operation which is based in Eastleigh, Hampshire and employs around 120 people.

Improved efficiency

Draper Tools has moved from a long-established, paper-based environment to a warehouse management system driving handheld terminals and mobile computers and is now in the process of integrating its technologies more fully.

Thanks to this new technology that drives its warehousing and logistics division the company has been able to service additional demand without taking on the temporary staff it used to.

WMS-driven operation

A 'Red Ledge WMS' warehouse management system now sits at the heart of the company's 15,000-SKU operation. The WMS is integrated with Draper Tools' IBM ERP (enterprise resource planning) and Knapp automated picking systems and is capable of updating inventory in real time. Other, WMS-driven functions include a volumetric packing optimiser, automated labelling and carrier management. The company's 100+ mobile scanners that are now used by its warehouse teams are also driven by the Red Ledge WMS. Future objectives include greater automation of Draper Tools' export order fulfilment.

"Having a WMS allows you to drive efficiencies and adapt to new working practices such as drop shipping directly to consumers on behalf of our customers. Also, we are now able to pick orders in batches rather than single orders, delivering efficiencies in the use of warehouse time" Matt Boschi

explains. “The orders are all single units but rather than doing 600 journeys round the warehouse we are doing thirty. And we have that ability because Red Ledge is helping us by writing and tweaking the applications we need.”

More profitable

The Draper Logistic Team works closely with the Red Ledge team to ensure that the WMS is harnessed to the needs of the business. The system is used to generate management reports on the performance of Draper Tools individuals, teams and warehouse processes. “Greater operational visibility is making warehousing and logistics here a more profitable part of the business by driving down our costs” Matt Boschi says.

“With the Red Ledge WMS we are well positioned to manage all types of change” Matt Boschi concludes, “and the functionality of our WMS can be easily replicated to support multiple operations domestically or globally.”

More information

www.redledge.co.uk

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