Interview with Brad Wyland, Datria

Solutions to aid mobile workers

*Brad Wyland, VP Strategic Marketing, **Datria**, was interviewed by Bill Meisel in late December. Wyland brings over 17 years of supply chain experience to the Datria team. Prior to joining Datria, Wyland was the Director of Product Strategy at Seegrid Corporation, the leading provider of Industrial Mobile Robots. Previously, Wyland was a senior supply chain research analyst at Aberdeen Group, Sr. Product Manager at Vocollect, Inc., and was a Sr. Product Marketing Manager at PeopleSoft (now Oracle). Wyland started his supply chain career in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania as a Consultant with HB Maynard before joining Systems Modeling (now Rockwell Software) in 1995. Wyland holds a B.S. in Industrial Engineering and an M.B.A. from the University of Pittsburgh.*

Please summarize Datria's business focus and products.

For more than 13 years, Datria has been providing innovative voice solutions to assist mobile workers in performing a wide range of tasks in a variety of industries. Simply by wearing a headset connected to any mobile device, workers are directed via voice to complete a task and can easily provide confirmation or data back to a host system. With Datria's powerful voice interface, companies typically see increased worker productivity, fewer errors, improved safety, and real-time process visibility. Greater savings can come from combining voice with other technologies such as RF scanning, RFID, or automated material handling systems. An open platform drives Datria's solutions for any voice, any task, any place, any time, and is recognized as the first VoIP and network-based speech recognition solution for the supply chain. Datria supports an ecosystem of more than 50,000 users.

Smartphones are increasingly speech-enabled and multimodal. Do companies use ruggedized smartphones in the warehouse?

Inexpensive and durable smartphones are everywhere these days, including the supply chain. Dedicated speech recognition devices are no longer required to implement a solution that can deliver many benefits and a strong return on investment. A ruggedized phone or smartphone can be utilized at 75% - 85% less cost and have a payback of 3-9 months.

Advancements in mobile phone hardware and software have accelerated and increased the awareness and use of speech recognition in our everyday lives. Google and Nuance are great examples example of bringing network-based speech recognition to smartphones to assist us in daily tasks. Datria's network-based speech- recognition easily connects to any mobile or smartphone over an existing network to automate any process inside the warehouse, in the store, or in the truck.

When you look at the variety of "enterprise class" devices available today, the advances in design and additional features has made it easier to deploy inside any warehouse or industrial environment. These phones now include:

- Ruggedized designs to withstand a variety of warehouse environments and wear and tear;
- Full-shift battery talk-time to improve efficiency and productivity;
- Multi-slot rechargers and other peripherals making devices easier to share and manage; and
- Multimodal options for integrating wired or Bluetooth RF scanners and printers.

Because Datria is hardware-agnostic and supports a variety of mobile devices, we are not only excited by these recent advances, but continue to work with manufacturers to improve their capabilities and features as our customers continue to rollout across their enterprise. Current examples of ruggedized phones/smartphones our customers have deployed include Cisco 7925G or 7925G-EX,

Motorola EWP2100, Polycom SpectraLink 8400-series, and Ascom Wireless i62, d62 and d81. Ruggedized smartphones with on-board scanning customers have deployed include Motorola EWP3100 and ES400, Polycom SpectraLink 8452, Intermec CS40, and Opticon H19a and H21. Phones for retail store use include Ascom Wireless d41, d62 or i62, Motorola "The Badge" (EWB100) and EWP2100, Polycom SpectraLink 8400-series, and Cisco 7921G. (Datria's products are software; the company does not sell hardware.)

Can you give an example of where multimodal capabilities are creating value?

One of the most exciting places we see voice being combined with scanning is in the retail store. The combination of these two technologies on the store floor has increased worker productivity (fewer workers to manage the process), improved inventory accuracy in real-time, and delivered more timely shelf replenishments (reducing out-of-stocks), all while enabling employees to help customers with price and availability look-ups (increasing customer satisfaction). Instead of pages or leaving the customer to find the proper price or where an item can be found, they are now connected in real-time.

Multimodal use is also growing in the warehouse, where RF scanning and RFID complement voice for times when data is hard to read (e.g., tiny serial numbers) or too long to speak (e.g., production batch identification). Datria has been delivering multimodal applications since the mid-1990s and has combined voice with keypads, touch screens, scanners, RFID readers, laser range finders, GPS, and more. We believe it's important to align the technology with the task in order for the real benefits to arise. Too often, sacrifices are made in order to try and force voice to fit a process.

How have technology evolutions—such as noise-canceling headsets or mounting options—made solutions easier?

The rapid evolution of technology has helped to make mobility and automation more affordable and easier than ever to use. Noise-canceling headsets are a great example. Market demand for noise-cancellation technology (hands-free cell phone operation in noisy cars, talking to personal navigation devices, blocking out the background drone on airplanes, etc.) has driven the cost down while the effectiveness has risen exponentially. There is a broad range of noise-canceling headsets that effectively and affordably deliver high quality filtering of dynamic and ambient noise. Durable and lightweight noise-canceling headsets can typically be found for as low as $45.

In addition, the improvements in Bluetooth technology provide even greater flexibility and efficiency, and can last beyond a single shift on one charge. By utilizing Bluetooth technology, the worker can be completely free from the risk of snagging or getting tangled in the cables from headsets or scanners and printers. Now, the worker can simply store or cradle the mobile phone on a pallet jack or forklift and easily move around to perform any task.

Where do you see new areas where voice will creatively automate employee work processes?

Without question, we see voice extending beyond the four walls of the warehouse, in the yard, in the truck, to the store; all focused on creating a more lean flow of product throughout the supply chain.

Retail store delivery is an area where voice can add value, enhancing communications from the warehouse to store to facilitate the receipt and replenishment of product to reduce inventory excess and shortages. Moving from the back room, related store tasks such as markdowns, promotions, and cycle-counting are easily simplified and improved by adding voice.

We also see growth beyond the supply chain, helping to provide value to mobile field service, enterprise asset management, and parts management and maintenance, all by providing hands-free and

eyes-free interfaces on any capable mobile phone.

Any final comments?

The voice solutions of the past were built to make up for the gaps in hardware and software related to voice recognition. As standards and technology have evolved, not only in capability but also at a more affordable price point, Datria has capitalized and developed a platform that easily integrates powerful voice solutions with any mobile device. Enterprises no longer have to wait for the solution providers to tweak it and make it better, or build a dedicated device to make it work, the solutions are available now, and deliver more powerful recognition and integration.

Voice-directed work now easily extends beyond the warehouse to support any voice, any task, any place, any time. If you're not achieving a 3-9 month payback at less than 50% the TCO of other technology, it's time to do your homework.

Mail or fax orders to: TMA Associates, P.O. Box 570308, Tarzana, CA 91357-0308 USA. Tel: (818) 708-0962. Fax: (818) 345-2980,
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