

Vanderlande brings item picking cobot technology to life

Veghel, 11 September 2018 – Vanderlande has developed a ‘cobot application’ (a robot physically capable of working alongside human operators) together with the leading Finnish trading company in assembly and fastening materials, Würth Oy, and their software partner (Leanware Oy) in a shared pilot project. The cobot – nicknamed ‘SIIRI’ – is now operational at Würth’s logistics centre in the town of Riihimäki, just north of Helsinki.

Robotic technology has long been used in the warehousing industry for the automated movement of goods. However, the SIR (Smart Item Robotics) solution is unique, owing to its utilisation of a robot unit that is able to work harmoniously in the same area as a human operator and ability to smartly ‘pick and place’ individual items. In this way, the project addresses one of the key challenges in the market, which is the continuing lack of an available and skilled workforce.

One of SIR’s most significant strengths is its ability to handle various products without SKU teaching. In addition, intelligent stacking enables the efficient positioning of goods, while products are handled smoothly and securely.

After a lead time of less than two months, SIR has been integrated into Würth’s daily operations alongside Vanderlande’s highly flexible storage, retrieval and transportation system, ADAPTO, to seamlessly pick products for its customer orders. It can be controlled using the same interface as other processes in the Riihimäki logistics centre and represents Vanderlande’s first Smart Item Robot to be used in live operations.

“In practice, SIIRI is now entering school, where it will develop greatly,” says Würth’s Logistics Manager Terhi Vesala. “In the beginning, we will learn what type of products the cobot can handle, how it can better enhance the picking process on site and the most logical division of work. We are striving for total efficiency in human and cobot cooperation, so that the strengths of each can be optimised. In other words, we are experiencing what this robot is truly capable of.”

“This pilot project will give us invaluable experience in the continued development of robotic technology,” adds Terry Verkuijlen, executive vice president Warehousing and Parcel at Vanderlande. “Thanks to the logistics expertise that exists in Finland and the close partnership we enjoy with Würth, Riihimäki had the ideal conditions in which to bring SIR to life. Of course, this is an early stage in its development, so we will be proactively monitoring the situation, and working closely with Würth and Leanware to further optimise SIR’s capabilities.”

Company profile of Vanderlande

Vanderlande is the global market leader for value-added logistic process automation at airports, and in the parcel market. The company is also a leading supplier of process automation solutions for warehouses.

Vanderlande’s baggage handling systems move 3.7 billion pieces of luggage around the world per year, in other words 10.1 million per day. Its systems are active in 600 airports including 13 of the

world's top 20. More than 39 million parcels are sorted by its systems every day, which have been installed for the world's leading parcel companies. In addition, many of the largest global e-commerce players and distribution firms have confidence in Vanderlande's efficient and reliable solutions.

The company focuses on the optimisation of its customers' business processes and competitive positions. Through close cooperation, it strives for the improvement of their operational activities and the expansion of their logistical achievements. Vanderlande's extensive portfolio of integrated solutions – innovative systems, intelligent software and life-cycle services – results in the realisation of fast, reliable and efficient automation technology.

Established in 1949, Vanderlande has more than 5,500 employees, all committed to moving its customers' businesses forward at diverse locations on every continent. With a consistently increasing turnover of more than 1.4 billion euros, it has established a global reputation over the past six decades as a highly reliable partner for value-added logistic process automation.

For more information about the company, its products and technology, as well as career opportunities, please visit www.vanderlande.com.

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