

Siemens successfully upgrades Vodacom's Pick-by-light equipment

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Siemens has been involved with the Vodacom Distribution centre in Midrand since its inception. The company has designed, installed and commissioned the system over the 2000/2001 period and have been actively involved with maintaining and improving the system during its 15+ years of operation.

The Pick-By-Light equipment, being 15+ years old, has serviced the picking operation, within the warehouse, very well but it was fast becoming redundant and spare parts were especially difficult to source.

Vodacom approached Siemens to upgrade the current equipment as well as to consider possible enhancements to increase the capacity for their ever expanding product range. With Siemens' partners and supplier network they were able to make a value proposition which eloquently addressed both requirements, and resulted in significant additional work packages that will be implemented during 2016.

The scope of this project package included the alteration to the carton flow racking to increase Vodacom's storage locations as well as the modifications to the racking to accommodate the new Pick-By-Light infrastructure. Previously daisy chained, the new system operates off a common BUS arrangement which requires care and precision in making the mounting surface as flat and as straight as possible, this calls for a well balanced and committed team.

The older controllers and terminal units, still utilized Windows 2000 OS, this too was upgraded in this package.

It was very important that Vodacom could still continue with production during this installation period therefore Siemens took the approach of upgrading 5 zones, out of a total of 10, at a time.

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“In addition to having spare parts readily available which is a characteristic of newer equipment, the customer will benefit from a more streamlined reliable system, which should see their efficiency increase and his downtime significantly decrease”, says Malcolm Longley, Head of Customer Services, Siemens Southern & East Africa.

Its design is such that additional locations and zones can be easily added to increase their capacity even further. Currently there are 10 Picking Zones with a compliment of 757 picking locations. In comparison with the older equipment, this is an increase of 15%. The “Plug and Play” architecture allows for reduced installation and commissioning times.

Different coloured LEDs and additional buttons allow the operations more flexibility with the possibility of introducing new procedure and operational processes. For instance: To assist with the stock take procedure and count verification.

Mr Lloyd Alvis, Executive Head, Vodacom Distribution centre, expressed his gratitude to Siemens for a successful upgrade to their equipment by saying “Our thanks to the Siemens team, your hard work is much appreciated and we are eager to take advantage of this added capacity.”

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