

How Light helps with small parts storage

Workers in TRUMPF's central spare parts logistics warehouse move thousands of parts into and out of inventory every day. A digital assistant is on hand to help avoid errors. We took a closer look at this solution for Industry 4.0.

From lenses and nozzles to ceramic components, Marko Krajacic has a lot to keep track of. Fortunately, a system of lights on the shelves helps him keep on top of things. Over 25,000 different small parts make their way through TRUMPF's central spare parts logistics warehouse in Ditzingen. Sooner or later, all of them pass through his hands. "I have to sort each part into the right box to ensure it doesn't get stored in the wrong place," says Krajacic.

Digital assistant for error-free part sorting

Krajacic fills some 600 containers a day. For the last couple of years, he has been supported by a kind of digital assistant known as a 'pick-by-light' system. As soon as he scans a delivery's barcode, the box he needs to put it in lights up. "Previously, I had to enter each order in the computer, and occasionally something would go wrong – but now all I have to do is press a button," says Krajacic. The new system also puts less of a strain on him physically. "I used to cover 16 kilometers going back and forth according to my smartwatch, but now that's dropped to about 11."

Paper has had its day

"We've also seen productivity in this job go up by about 50 percent," says Katrin Eiss, the group leader responsible for warehouse logistics. She explains that this is due not just to simpler workflows, but also fewer errors that subsequently have to be rectified. "The number of errors is approaching zero," says Eiss. Previously, workers had to look at a consignment note to know which parts they should put where. The instructions on the work order were sometimes easy to follow – but sometimes not. "The lights help people learn to do the job much faster and make the whole process completely paperless,"

says Eiss.

35 percent drop in complaints

Pick-by-light is also popular with staff. "The team makes fewer mistakes and feels more confident they are doing things right. People tend to like the job because everything is nice and tidy. You don't have things lying around and the work is easier," says Philipp Marschand, group manager for the warehouse control center and quality assurance. Over the past two fiscal years, the number of complaints related to shipments has fallen by 35 percent. "Digitalization takes the strain off our logistics experts. They can focus on key tasks such as system management, maintaining master data, and inspecting and documenting incoming goods," says Marschand. The time gained can be spent on more important things, he says, so there's no chance of getting bored!