



# Lucas optimisation solutions solve for Silmid's demanding distribution needs

Headquartered in Coleshill near Birmingham, U.K., Silmid, a part of the Graco Roberts family of companies, is a specialist distributor of chemical consumables used throughout aerospace and aviation, for both OEM and MRO, supplying customers in over 100 countries for 40 years.

With a key value proposition of providing the on-demand supply of small volume orders primarily via its full service B2B ecommerce website, Silmid is a long-time partner of key suppliers including PPG Aerospace, Shell Aviation, and 3M Aerospace, and can source from over 400 vendors to meet customer requirements. They store more than 5,000 SKUs at the Coleshill facility and process in excess of 240 different orders per day, equating to about 60,000 individual orders per year.

According to Tony Smith, Operations Manager, “What’s most important to our customers is speed of delivery and quality of product. If a customer places an order before 4:30 p.m., we ship same day.” Silmid’s focus on customer service, outstanding quality and accuracy has made them the first choice for customers working in aerospace and aviation globally.

## Unique customer requirements challenge packing and picking processes

Like many organisations seeking to maintain the highest productivity and accuracy standards as their order volumes grow, Silmid began to experience throughput and productivity challenges. These included some process inefficiencies, lack of visibility and longer fulfillment time, leading to missed KPIs with some customers.

Adding to that, the company had a need to scale up to support aggressive corporate growth goals of more than 25%. Their situation was further complicated by their distinctive product and supplies mix making for unique packing functionality needs, and picking process limitations around batching or optimisation.



# Process optimisation driven by voice directed warehousing and RF scanning

In early meetings with Lucas, Silmid representatives were initially intrigued by the Lucas focus on driving operational excellence for their customers, said Jas Dhillon, Silmid Managing Director. What also stood out, was Lucas Systems unique experience and ability around enhanced picking functionality, as well as their capabilities in supporting staging and packing improvements, and visibility through the supply chain. For more than 25 years, Lucas Systems has helped companies transform their distribution center by dramatically increasing worker productivity, operational agility, and customer and worker satisfaction using voice and AI optimisation technologies.



*“We had a backlog of about 300-400 orders and were doing constant overtime. Now, with Lucas, we’re doing next day delivery.”*

- Jas Dhillon, Silmid Managing Director

As discussions evolved into what a customised solution might look like, Silmid and Lucas decided to focus on a few specific areas. Powered through unique warehouse AI that is embodied in Jennifer™, the brains, orchestration engine and voice of the solution, Lucas proposed to bring systematic process and logic to the picking function, focused on:

- **Multi-modal picking** - Using voice and RF scanning
- **Order prioritisation** - Featuring continuous order prioritisation without waves
- **Intelligent batching** - On demand batch optimisation for all equipment
- **Optimised pick paths** - Reducing worker travel and fulfillment time
- **Management console** - Integrated real-time dashboards to drive optimised visibility and decision making for management

In addition, Lucas built process and visibility around staging and packing that offered:

- **Staging confirmation** - Pickers confirm what location they stage each order
- **Staging visibility** - A screen displaying the time each order has been staged, along with the order details
- **Packing confirmation** - Packers select and confirm what order they have collected to pack
- **Packing productivity** - Packing productivity by user (# of orders/lines/pieces) recorded and reported on management console

# Smooth implementation amps up productivity and enables same day shipping

Throughout the solution development process, the teams established a collaborative cadence and course that they carried through to a smooth implementation and go-live. Within months, Silmid began to experience transformational results. **“The efficiency that we’ve gained since going live with Lucas is in excess of 35% and our current accuracy is now 99.9%,”** said Tony, who also cited a 60% improvement in throughput. Furthermore, their picking backlog had all but disappeared. “We were trailing behind up to a three to four day backlog,” explained Jas. “Since implementation of the Lucas software, we’re down to less than half a day. That enables us to meet that same day, next day delivery promise to our customers.”

In addition, according to Tony, **training used to take several days for new workers to get up to speed, but since going live with Lucas that has been reduced to two hours.** The feedback they’ve had from employees since implementing Jennifer is tremendously positive as well. “We never get a shortage of people willing to go on picking, whereas picking before used to be a bit of a chore and we never had many volunteers,” said Tony.



**99.9%**  
order  
accuracy



**35%**  
efficiency  
gain



**60%**  
improvement  
in throughput





The smashing success has served as the foundation for the company to begin exploring other opportunities to gain efficiencies through automation. “The Lucas solution has been excellent for us and it’s great to see the team enjoying using it. It’s the first step for us to digitalise the site,” said Jas. “We value automation with a human touch. We have people here that are creative, they fix problems and this tool with Lucas enables them to do it in a more efficient way.”

Jas shared that Lucas has been a key factor in attracting and retaining customers, demonstrating Silmid is looking upstream in terms of processes, visibility, and building out capabilities. “Many of our clients are moving to the Supply Chain 4.0 standard, and giving customers that full transparency is a winning factor. That’s how we succeed with them.”

Lucas Systems helps companies transform their distribution center operations and continuously adapt to changing market dynamics. We dramatically increase worker productivity, operational agility, and customer satisfaction. Our solutions are built on 25+ years of deep process expertise and smart software using AI and voice technologies. Our solutions feature Jennifer™, the brain, voice, and orchestration engine that drives performance improvement gains. Make the smartest moves at the lowest cost with Jennifer™.



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