DHL Supply Chain launches software platform with Blue Yonder on Microsoft cloud to accelerate implementation of warehouse robotics through standardization

24-06-2020

DHL Supply Chain has just launched a new "plug & play" robotics platform in collaboration with Microsoft, and leading artificial intelligence (AI) driven digital fulfillment provider Blue Yonder.

The robotics platform significantly reduces integration time and programming efforts to on-board new automation devices into warehouse facilities, while giving DHL customers more flexibility in selecting suitable robotics systems according to their individual business needs. The solution leverages Microsoft Azure IoT and cloud platform services.

"The global deployment of robots and robotic systems is integral to our strategy to support our employees and improve customer operations," says Markus Voss, Global CIO and COO at DHL Supply Chain. "Automation and collaborative robotics help us make operational processes more flexible, ergonomic and more attractive to our employees by replacing monotonous, repetitive and particularly strenuous activities. The aim is not to replace employees over time, but to assign the more attractive and interesting tasks to our human workforce."

Voss adds: "We have more than 2,000 operational sites across DHL Supply Chain, so we know how complex, time-consuming and costly it can be to integrate new robots into existing platforms and connect to our clients' various warehouse management systems. This is exactly where the new platform is so effective. Our first implementation on the new platform with 6 River Systems at one of our Madrid sites is already showing a 60% reduction in integration times, but with subsequent deployments we foresee further improvements of up to 90%."

A first implementation at a DHL Supply Chain facility in Madrid has already demonstrated that the new platform can reduce complexity and accelerate the integration of robotic systems into an existing warehouse management system. At the same time, the platform gives customers greater flexibility in selecting and integrating different robotics vendors in one system.

The robotics platform is powered by Blue Yonder's Luminate Platform with machine-learning (ML)-driven task management capabilities that enable the highest level of warehouse operational efficiency.

"Building a resilient and flexible supply chain is essential to respond to constantly changing customer needs. By digitizing their warehouse solutions, DHL is dramatically simplifying the integration of complex IoT systems and unlocking new business opportunities for the logistics industry. The result: greater advancements in speed, global scale, cost reduction, and security," says Sam George, Corporate Vice President Azure IoT at Microsoft.

"By using Blue Yonder's Luminate Platform, DHL was able to offer a solution that can be implemented across all of its distribution center sites seamlessly through a cloud SaaS application. In the age of labor market shortages during peak season, DHL sites can now bring on a robotics vendor quickly to augment its resource capacity and support its workforce," said Girish Rishi, CEO, Blue Yonder. "This project was a true collaboration across all stakeholders."

With this collaboration, DHL Supply Chain, Microsoft and Blue Yonder combine their strengths in customer-centric contract logistics, secure cloud computing at global scale, and seamless end-to-end supply chain integration to improve warehouse management and operational excellence for a wide range of industry customers.

While the new software platform is just one part of DHL Supply Chain's company-wide digitalization strategy - that includes the use of DHL's focus technologies such as robots, smart operations through wearable devices and data analytics - it plays an essential role in facilitating and accelerating the deployment of new technologies on a large scale.

Source: Deutsche Post DHL