

Wärtsilä and DHL deploy cutting-edge mobile robots from Fetch Robotics to streamline warehouse operations

Bonn, July 11, 2017: The technology group Wärtsilä and DHL, the world's leading logistics company, have completed a successful pilot, where the companies tested mobile robots of Fetch Robotics. The pilot was carried out in Wärtsilä's central distribution centre in Kampen, the Netherlands, where the entire logistics chain of Wärtsilä's spare parts, from order intake to customer delivery, is managed. As Wärtsilä's partner, DHL runs the warehouse operations.

The aim of the project was to investigate possibilities to utilize the latest technology innovations in the daily operations of the warehouse. Wärtsilä and DHL also wanted to gain more understanding of the added value of robotics in a warehouse environment and to learn about the human–technology interface between robots and employees.

The mobile robot system simplifies point to point material handling. Workflows at Wärtsilä's warehouse can be set up and modified very quickly to accommodate today's dynamic environments, without the need for complex programming. Workers can interact with the robots via touchscreen and send them on their journeys with a push of a button.

“Our colleagues took center stage during the trial. The robots are designed to work alongside employees and to relieve them from physically strenuous tasks. The robots alone took over a walking distance of more than 30 kilometers per day, thereby increasing productivity and safety within the warehouse working environment,” says Denis Niezgodá, Robotics Accelerator Lead, DHL Customer Solutions & Innovation.

The autonomous mobile robots have a loading capacity of 78 kilograms and can cover a distance of two meters per second. When the battery life of maximum nine hours comes to an end, the freight robot independently makes its way to the charging unit. The intelligent robots recognize their location and surroundings, and can differentiate between dynamic and static obstacles, thus enabling evasive action to work safely with and around people.

Wärtsilä and partners to develop potential of mobile robots further

This new generation of smart mobile robots can impact the logistics industry through enhancing

people's capabilities. They enable people to perform tasks faster and save energy, thus improving efficiency.

“Our relationship with DHL is a great accomplishment. We were able to deploy our robots in the facility in a matter of days, rapidly improve on-site productivity, while increasing the safety of the warehouse employees,” explains Melonee Wise, CEO at Fetch Robotics.

“The pilot was a success and, as a result, we have decided to continue exploring and developing new applications of smart mobile robot technology. Over the coming months, we will continue to trial different robot types and technologies together with our partners to further improve productivity, quality and safety in our operations,” says Anne Träskbäck, General Manager, Parts Delivery at Wärtsilä Services. “We have exciting times ahead. Working with robots means embracing a new change, and co-operating in new, productive ways in the future.”