

BUSINESS

ALLEN MESSICK
MANAGING EDITOR
303-659-2522 • Ext. 203
amessick@metrowestnewspapers.com

Staples' Brighton plant to be a touch of the easy button

KEVIN DENKE
METROWEST EDITOR

When office supply chain Staples opens a new regional fulfillment center this summer in Brighton, it will offer revolutionary technology with the aim of providing superior

customer service.

Staples officials wooed attendees at Thursday's Brighton Chamber of Commerce VIP luncheon with knick-knacks such as over-sized pens and logo-emblazoned water bottles.

But the biggest wows came when Staples division operations manager, Jeff Ellis, un-

veiled how a team of high-powered robots would supplement the workforce at the Brighton facility.

Staples formed a partnership with Kiva Systems, a Massachusetts-based company which developed mobile order fulfillment systems for warehouses and distribution centers.

With a backdrop of video of the Kiva robots scurrying through a Staples facility in Chambersburg, Pa., Ellis explained to chamber members how the robots will be used in warehouse order retrieval. They will be programmed to bring the necessary product pod to the warehouse associate where the employee will continue with processing the customer order.

The orange robots don't look much different than an oversized version of the popu-

lar robotic vacuums used today in households but Ellis said they offer a highly-advanced form of order shipment.

When the warehouse employee gets the correct product pod, there is a three-fold system in place to make sure the correct item has been selected. First, the robot will have a laser pointer identifying the correct item, second the employee will have a laptop with a visual image of the correct item and, in a final step, the correct UPC code for the item also will need to be scanned.

"It's extremely tight, extremely tight," Ellis said of the order process. "It's very hard for an associate to mis-pick an item.

He said the technology the facility will employ is brand new and should draw visitors from across the world to see it in action.

"We've taken so much of the guessing game out of order fulfillment," he added.

Staples will occupy an existing warehouse near I-76 and Bromley Lane in Brighton, when it opens in mid-June, and will eventually employ about 100 people.

The facility will serve as a regional shipment center for contract, commercial and online orders – servicing Colorado, Montana, Utah, Wyoming and New Mexico. They will move from their currently facility in Aurora to Brighton.

And if chamber attendees were excited by the free gifts and the talk of robots, Ellis said the feeling is mutual.

"We're really happy to be here (Brighton)," he said. "We've been welcomed the community."