



Spirit boosts service levels for Manx Independent Carriers

The ability to track and trace packages and to gain accurate proof of delivery information is an integral element of a versatile parcels delivery operation. Manx Independent Carriers recently decided to migrate to a powerful mobile data capture solution sourced by Spirit Data Capture Limited. This has transformed the level of service that the company can now provide and has also boosted its customer satisfaction levels.



Manx Independent Carriers (MIC) is the Isle of Man's premier provider of groupage services and full load deliveries. Founded in 1985, the company now has 110 employees, working from two depots - one on the Isle of Man and one in Skelmersdale, Lancashire. The company specialises in time-sensitive deliveries of pallets, parcels and full loads. It also provides specialist services such as powder tankers, out of gauge cargo and temperature-controlled trailers.

Until recently, the firm had a very basic scanning system that provided very limited information, so most information was still captured by hand. Michael Coleman, Managing Director of Manx Independent Carriers, remarks: "We knew that we needed a more sophisticated system, so we started looking for a versatile handheld solution that could give us all of the information we required."

“Another parcel carrier told us about Spirit Data Capture Limited. They came highly recommended - the carrier said that they had been very impressed by their professionalism.”

Michael continues: “We deliver items for carriers in the UK – they send us the parcels but we couldn’t read the barcode data, so we had to generate notes manually. When the drivers came back after deliveries, we had to enter the proof of delivery data onto our system. If a customer wanted to know where a package was, we had to track it physically. We would have to call the driver to try and find the information – which was a very inefficient and time-consuming process.



Defining the needs

“We therefore told Spirit that we needed a system that could track all of the packages in our care; and that could record the data on the packages and feed it into our system for track and trace, management reports etc. We particularly wanted to make life easier for our drivers. We also wanted a device that could recognise all of the different barcode formats used by our carrier customers so that we could automatically assign any items to the correct companies.”

Spirit made several recommendations to MIC and the company subsequently chose the Motorola MC70. This versatile mobile device incorporates features such as a mobile phone, PDA, computer, scanner, GPS, biometrics and imager in a single, rugged unit. For field workers, it offers support for eGPRS (EDGE) networks and at the depots, it connects to a wireless LAN. It also incorporates Bluetooth functionality.

Michael Coleman comments: “We liked the screen size, the build quality and the impressive functionality of the MC70. We also liked the fact that it has Bluetooth and can act as a phone. We’ve now had in-car kits put into our vehicles so that our drivers can use the unit as a phone or can take a call over Bluetooth.”

Using the devices

The new devices can capture data (such as the consignment number and delivery address) electronically from each parcel by scanning its label. All of this information is now made available on a web platform developed for MIC by Spirit.

Within MIC’s warehouse, the Motorola devices work on an industrial WiFi system installed by Spirit. At the driver’s bay, the driver uses the MC70 to scan the parcels in the order he will deliver them. Spirit has also developed software so that the driver can drag and drop different information on the scanner.

When the driver leaves the depot, the scanner switches automatically to GPRS. The deliveries are recorded real time to the server and the information is sent to the customer in real time. Throughout the day, the Parcels Managers can use the system’s screens to manage the drivers. If there are a lot of drops left, they can call the driver on the MC70 to see if he needs any assistance. This use of real-time data enables the company to provide a much more fluid delivery service.

When the driver returns to the depot, the warehouse supervisor enters a security code into the mobile device. This tells him the precise details of all the deliveries the driver has made. He then scans any undelivered parcels left on the van, enabling him to account for every parcel that was sent out.

Developing the system

Spirit has helped Manx Independent Carriers to develop the system so that it now provides a wide range of management information. Michael Coleman explains: “Before we had the MC70s, we never knew exactly how many deliveries had been made in the course of a day. We didn’t have information such as the number of deliveries made to a particular postcode area.

“However, the Motorola devices now allow us to compile a lot of very useful management reports. For instance, we can see if there are certain postcodes that experience a lot of deliveries, where the driver may need additional support. It also helps us with planning for seasonal peaks. We can look at the data from previous years so that we can ensure that the maximum numbers of drivers are available at the busiest periods.

“Before we had the MC70s, the drivers had to create delivery notes themselves and the proof of delivery notes had to be fed into the system afterwards. They then had to be transferred to our customers’ computers. Spirit then developed proof of delivery software for us. Spirit’s server translates the data into the format needed by the customer, enabling the customer to import the data and see the information in real time.”

Michael Coleman adds: “The Motorola devices are very reliable – we’ve had no technical issues with them at all and we are very happy with them. They weren’t the cheapest option, but they’ve really proved themselves. Our services to our customers have improved ten-fold and the new system has also brought a host of operational benefits.

“I can’t speak highly enough of Spirit. They are very flexible, very reactive and very professional and give an excellent customer service. Their development team is also very good – they are very patient with us and very good at interpreting our ideas and turning them into practical solutions.”

He concludes: “We have a great partnership with Spirit now, and take their advice on any hardware issues. We’ve also bought other items, such as thermal label printers, from them. Although we’ve been using the MC70s for our parcel operations, in the long term we want to develop a similar system for pallets – and Spirit will be helping us to develop that.”