

MISCO adds new Spirit to its warehouse operations

Warehouse operations need to be fast, efficient and accurate. When Misco, a company which specialises in online sales of IT solutions, decided to upgrade its warehouse management system recently, it turned to Spirit Data Capture Limited for help. Spirit recommended a new wireless infrastructure accompanied by Motorola MC9090 handheld mobile computers. This new approach has already started to transform Misco's operations, saving the company time, money and trouble.



Misco is a leading online provider of IT products and services to the private and public sector. Its portfolio includes over 20,000 products from leading manufacturers. Within the UK, Misco has an annual turnover of £168 million. Its UK distribution centre is based in Greenock, Scotland. As it is a part of the International Systemax Group, it also has operations throughout Europe - including Germany, Italy, Spain, France, Holland and Sweden.

Two years ago, Misco started looking at ways of streamlining its warehouse operations. The company's MIS Administrator, Clark Wainwright, explains: "We had been using PCs and printers to carry out our warehouse management. However, we decided that we needed a solution that would free our workforce from their PCs and the associated paperwork."

Case Study

"We wanted them to have more time to focus on key business activities. We also wanted to put additional warehouse checks into place. As UPC/EAN codes now play a significant role in warehouse operations, using these had also become a priority for us. We had been looking at some new technologies, and realised that they could be of great benefit to us."

After consulting several suppliers and looking at several solutions and ideas, Misco decided to ask Spirit Data Capture to develop the new system. "We felt that Spirit were able to match the demands we had, in a way that suited our business," says Clark.

Spirit proposed the development of a complete wireless infrastructure for the warehouse. This would be accompanied by Motorola MC9090 mobile computers, which would be used to streamline the company's 'pick and pack' operations. Due to the large size of the warehouse, an 18 metre high scissor lift was needed for the installation of the wireless backbone – but this enabled the whole site to be covered by just seven access points.

Misco had specified that the mobile computers needed to be capable of accurate scanning from both close by and from a distance (as some product barcodes could be out of reach). They also needed to be rugged and long lasting. The MC9090 proved to be the best solution for the company's needs. It uses Microsoft Windows CE and offers support for full multi-mode wireless connectivity.

Clark continues: "The warehouse isn't a very forgiving environment, so we bought rugged rubber casings for the MC9090s. This proved to be a good decision – a unit was recently dropped 20 feet onto a concrete floor, but continued to function properly afterwards! We also liked the long battery life on the devices, as we didn't want to have to keep changing them every day."

The wireless network was installed last year, and Misco subsequently started to use the MC9090s within the warehouse. The transition is being taken step by step – the units are currently being used in the Goods In department and for storing the products in defined locations.

"Spirit have helped us at every stage of the process," says Clark. "They have found solutions to our problems and have always made themselves readily available to



answer any questions, dealing with our queries with patience and expertise."

He adds: "The new system is working very well. By using wireless technology, we no longer have to run cabling all over the warehouse. New units can be added without having to consider how to connect them to the network, and how we can get power to them.

"Without doubt, the system has saved us time and money and has increased the accuracy of the data we record – for instance, we now use the mobile computers for UPC/EAN checks. We now spend less time having to deal with errors at the Goods In stage. As stock is now 'live', it is available for sale in a much shorter timescale, which also increases customer satisfaction levels.

"We have had a lot of positive feedback from the users in the warehouse, who have seen the difference the system makes to their daily activities – particularly by reducing the paperwork involved. They are a very busy team, and now that there is a system which is more efficient and more accurate, it means they have to spend less time solving problems."

Clark concludes: "Spirit have been highly professional throughout, and I would have no hesitation in recommending them to others. We are continuing to work closely with them as we develop the warehouse system further. They are also looking at other devices that might be better for different departments within the warehouse – for instance, we are currently testing a wearable terminal."