

Honeywell helps Minipreis manage its stock efficiently with the Dolphin 6100 mobile computer

Executive Summary and Background

Automatic identification and data recording has advanced dramatically over the past few years: today, quicker transmission standards and improved reading technology enable retail businesses to significantly improve efficiency in their inventory management systems.

The supermarket chain Minipreis, based in East Westphalia, Germany, is also making use of automatic identification technology. Honeywell's Dolphin® 6100 mobile computer is improving efficiency in its stock management system and is proving very popular with its operators. Features such as its angled imager and compact form factor are also providing real productivity benefits.

In 2011, Minipreis celebrates its 50 year jubilee. Currently, 1200 employees in 34 branches contribute to the success of the company. The food supermarkets are mainly located in the heart of Westphalia, as well as a few markets in Hesse and Thuringia.

Minipreis operates a complete logistics centre at its headquarters in Salzkotten, with around 10,000 m² of warehouse space and its own fleet. Over the long term, management is planning moderate growth in the core area of the business and focusing on regional strengths in customer relationship and the product range.

The Business Challenge

Given Minipreis's reputation for embracing the latest technology, a re-refresh of the company's existing estate of mobile computers was a priority. Several types of legacy hand-held devices had been in operation which had very limited functionality and were becoming rapidly outdated. For example, after every step of a procedure, the units had to be connected to the store manager's computer so



Overview:

Client: Minipreis-Läden GmbH

Country: Germany

Market: Retail

Application: Stock management

Distributor: Bluestar

System Integrator: Barcodat

Software Solution Provider: Superdata

Product Solutions: Honeywell Dolphin® 6100 mobile computer

that the data could be read. This task was fairly inconvenient with the availability of WLAN and real-time data transfer.

Markus Hupe, IT Manager at Minipreis, gained an overview of the market and benchmarked several devices. During this process, the supermarket chain received technical support from Honeywell Strategic Business Partner, Barcodat; a company based in Dornstetten that has been specialising in the implementation of data recording and labelling systems since 1986. Together with Minipreis, the specialist company drew up an extensive list of requirements. These included a user-friendly interface, a robust and ergonomic form factor, wireless LAN implementation and software that could be seamlessly integrated into their existing supermarket software—“Dewas.” from Superdata

Employees' Choice

Following a detailed evaluation, the number of potential devices dwindled significantly. In the end, the short list consisted of just two devices; one of them being the Dolphin 6100 from Honeywell Scanning & Mobility. "We let the employees make the final decision since they work with the devices on a daily basis," stated Hupe. Devices were provided to the store managers to test in a live environment on-site and compile their opinions. The Dolphin 6100 was the unanimous favourite when it came to the ease-of-use and range of functions.

Innovative Technology

The employees were particularly impressed with the state-of-the-art imaging technology which replaced the more traditional laser-based bar code scanners. Honeywell's Adaptus® imaging technology enables the 6100 to read virtually all 2D matrix bar codes with the added benefit of being able to read damaged or poorly printed codes. Area-imaging engines, such as those integrated in the Dolphin 6100, can also capture signatures and photos of important items, such as proof of delivery documentation and damaged goods.

"The technology benefits us in many ways. The ability to identify all types of 2D bar codes—now so prevalent within supply chain applications—means that we are equipped to deal with many future tasks and, as a consequence, are able to protect our investment in this new technology for several years to come," says Hupe. In contrast to laser-based data recording devices, imagers do not contain any fragile or moving parts, which also make them suitable for use in rough environments such as goods-in areas or within the warehouse.

Implementing the new devices proved to be remarkably simple. A short training session lasting around one hour was sufficient to familiarise store personnel with how the Dolphin works. "All functions are more or less self-explanatory," stated Hupe.

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A New Colleague

Dolphin 6100 has quickly become a new "colleague" for the Minipreis personnel who use it for stock management. During that process, individual items are recorded using the imager, and their specifications are compared with the information on billboards and labels. If a shelf label is missing, a new one can be requested from the back office system with just a touch of a button. The data required for this function is exchanged with the central computer which uses bespoke supermarket software via a wireless connection using the 802.11g standard.

Employees can also easily import information regarding breakages and spoilage at any time, and this triggers a notice to refill the appropriate shelves within the inventory management system. "The devices are real all-rounders. Notwithstanding the obvious productivity benefits that the 6100 brings us, its user-friendly interface, durability and functionality means that it is the ideal solution for the team using the devices and for those running the financial side of the business. A real win-win situation for all!" says Hupe.

The Future

In the future, Minipreis envisages extending the range of tasks for which the hand-held devices can be used. Plans are underway to develop information technology to include automatic merchandise planning with incoming goods inspection. "We are not even close to exhausting the opportunities for optimising our retail management operations and in the 6100, we have a mobile data collection device equipped for all foreseeable developments," concluded Hupe.

Honeywell