

# Spirit's wearable solutions boost productivity for N Brown Group



Companies that have a large distribution and logistics operation need to ensure that their customers always receive the right items. When leading online home shopping company, N Brown, installed a new packing control system at its Logistics Centre, it wanted a faster, easier and more accurate way of scanning the barcodes on items and parcels. Spirit Data Capture Limited recommended Zebra WT6000 wearable mobile computers and RS4000 ring scanners, along with SOTI's MobiControl enterprise mobility management system. Spirit's solutions have helped to boost productivity by 15% and to reduce errors in the items being packed by 20%.

An expert in fashion that fits and flatters, N Brown is one of the UK's leading online retailers. Its key retail brands are JD Williams, Simply Be and Jacamo. N Brown's headquarters are in Manchester, where the company designs, sources and creates its products and employs over 2,600 people across the UK.

## Defining the issue

N Browns' Logistics Centre at Shaw has recently installed a new packing and despatch system. Joe Fisher, Senior Project Manager, manages the Logistics project office. He explains: "Historically, all of our parcels were sorted to van or depot rounds and despatched in large sacks for transportation to our carriers. The new automated despatch system has allowed us to move away from legacy sack despatching to loose load parcel despatching. This has eliminated a number of non value-added tasks that were being carried out by the packers."

The new packing control system was developed with the help of a third party software company. However, devices were needed to enable the packers to scan items to parcels and the parcels to despatch. N Brown decided that the best option would be wearable units, as these would leave the packers' hands free for other tasks, making the whole packing and scanning process easier.

The wearables needed to be very rugged as they would be used for 16 hours a day by different operators. The accuracy of the data capture was also paramount as this would provide valuable data for analysis, which would help N Brown to improve both its customer service and its internal processes.

## Developing the solution

The company therefore consulted Spirit Data Capture Limited, an independent consultancy that specialises in mobile enterprise solutions. Spirit has been supplying and supporting N Brown with numerous data capture solutions and with maintenance support since 2004.

Spirit recommended Zebra WT6000s and RS4000 ring scanners, along with SOTI's MobiControl, the UK's premier device management solution. The WT6000 is a wearable Android computer that is both smaller and lighter than other similar wearables on the market. It's designed to fit comfortably on an arm of any size and its rugged industrial design delivers maximum uptime in the most demanding environments.

The RS4000 is a small, lightweight ID ring scanner that fits on the finger of a mobile worker who is using the Zebra WT6000. It ensures that the worker's hands are free for handling items. A quick press of the RS4000's trigger verifies task accuracy and provides real-time inventory visibility.

Spirit has also provided a fully managed service, and has created a Gold Build for N Brown. It has provisioned all of the devices and provided the company with access to its online helpdesk portal. This provides N Brown with monthly automated reports showing the helpdesk tickets raised. Spirit also provides a quarterly service review that gives a trend analysis and provides statistical reports.

Joe Fisher comments: "The relatively large screen size of the WT6000s allows multiple instructions to be displayed to the operator. Combined with the light weight of the devices, this makes them very easy to use – and they also feel very comfortable."

The Logistics Centre at Shaw includes rows of fully automated chutes. When a customer orders an item of clothing or an accessory, it's dropped onto the chute. An operative below puts it into a bag, labels it and it's shipped off. It's vital that the order and the items from the chute are matched up to ensure that the right item goes to the right person. About 60 operatives use the new wearables to scan barcodes on packages and order numbers, reconciling them and then packing the items.

Meanwhile, MobiControl provides numerous functions that help with applications and device configuration. It also allows the wearable units to be locked down and secured to prevent any unauthorised web access or programme changes and actively monitors the devices for incorrect screen orientation.

## Reaping the rewards

The new wearables enable the operatives to capture real-time data. The operatives are very happy with the devices, which are light and easy to use. The units also provide information for reports. These allow N Brown to monitor packages at a granular level, which wasn't possible before.

"Since migrating to loose loading," says Joe Fisher, "we've gained a 15% increase in productivity. This has been delivered via the overall loose loading despatch process, and the scanning is an integral aspect of this."

He adds: "As we track items to parcels, we've also been able to reduce instances of the wrong items being put in a parcel or a parcel being sent off with an item missing. This obviously reduces both customer disappointment and carriage costs, as we don't have to send a second parcel with the correct items. Overall, there's been a 20% reduction in incorrect or missing items in parcels."



For further information contact us at:  
t: 01928 718800 f: 0870 762 2824  
email: [helen.jones@spiritdatacapture.co.uk](mailto:helen.jones@spiritdatacapture.co.uk)  
[www.spiritdatacapture.co.uk](http://www.spiritdatacapture.co.uk)

