

case study



Spirit helps Nature Delivered streamline its operations

In any large manufacturing or logistics operation in which countless repetitive tasks are taking place, a small increase in speed can lead to large time and cost savings. A prime example is Nature Delivered, which sourced a range of different barcode scanners recently, with the help of Spirit Data Capture Limited. The new devices have made life much easier for the company's operators and have speeded up operations – potentially saving up to two hours a day in some cases.

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Based in Richmond, Nature Delivered Limited is the company behind the famous range of 'Graze' healthy snack boxes. Graze.com was started by seven friends six years ago and has gone from strength to strength. It has created over 100 recipes for tasty, healthy snacks that are delivered in a Graze box.

Nature Delivered wanted to streamline its operations, so it started to explore the potential use of different barcode scanners. It was primarily looking for mobile wireless devices that would enable its warehouse operatives to keep both hands free, as they often need to pick up both large and small items and also to push equipment. They need to be able to carry and use the scanners without this disrupting their working pattern too much.

The company also needed devices that could easily scan items, so that they could be picked from a station one at a time, and omni-directional scanners for scanning items that are labelled by a printer that sits next to the scanner.

Nature Delivered's Operations Director, Andrew Middlecott, explains: "We wanted a variety of mobile devices that would work off a web browser. We needed advice from a company that knows a lot about the data capture market and who would be both friendly and reliable. During a Google search, we came across Spirit Data Capture, an established and independent consultancy."

Delivering the best solutions

Spirit offered various options to Nature Delivered, including three Bluetooth units. However, Bluetooth wasn't suitable for the company's needs. The organisation eventually chose four devices: a wearable computer; a ring scanner; Honeywell's SR30 1D barcode scanner; and the Honeywell Orbit omni-directional scanner.

The next-generation wearable computer provides hands-free voice and data capture capabilities. This is complemented by a ring scanner that offers superior performance levels and Honeywell's handheld linear imager, that can read even poor quality barcodes. Finally, the Honeywell Orbit is the best-selling, omni-directional, hands-free scanner.

Nature Delivered only uses one type of barcode on its products: EAN13 barcodes. The main criteria for the new devices therefore included the need for the scanners to recognise just EAN13 barcodes. Andrew Middlecott says:

"This ability speeds up the whole process. It saves milliseconds each time, but when we are picking and packing 1.4 million items per week, every millisecond counts." The devices also needed to be easily configurable, permit the use of prefixes, suffixes and brackets, and to allow redundant scans to be carried out (to show that it has returned the correct number).

For the wearable devices, Nature Delivered first looked at a

model that didn't have a touchscreen. It proved to be of no use to the company, as it was very difficult to configure. With the new wearable device, configuration is easy and the screen can be locked down so that the operators can only access the web page and can't change the settings. Like the ring scanner, it fits the company's criteria of having a device that was lightweight but wouldn't easily fall off. Andrew Middlecott had used the Honeywell Orbit in a previous job and had found it to be very reliable. Honeywell's linear imagers also proved to be highly dependable.

Making a difference

Andrew continues: "In relation to the wearable units, we particularly liked the warranty. This means that if something goes wrong with a device, we notify them and send the unit back. Meanwhile, they will have already sent us a new one – it's an excellent, trouble-free solution."

He adds: "We have developed a good relationship with Spirit – they are always helpful and amiable and have a very good technical knowledge. They loaned different devices to us, which saved us from having to buy units that later might have turned out to be unsuitable." Spirit also configured the wearable devices so that they can be locked down. Andrew comments: "This has been invaluable, otherwise when you do a hard re-set, you have to reconfigure everything from scratch."

He adds: "All of the devices have been working well. The main benefits are speed and convenience. The operators can't drop the ring scanners and the other wearable devices are strapped to their arms. This makes life a lot easier for them. All of these new devices are helping us to save precious seconds on each case of products we process – overall, I estimate that they could potentially save us up to two hours a day. We're absolutely delighted with Spirit and wouldn't consider using anyone else."

Notes for Editors: Spirit Data Capture is an independent consultancy specialising in mobile enterprise solutions. Based in Sutton Weaver, Cheshire, the company has extensive experience of wireless and mobile computing technologies. It is committed to sourcing solutions that will streamline its customers' operations and boost their productivity.

Spirit's capabilities include software application development; hardware (including handheld and wearable devices, mobile printers and wireless infrastructure); mobile device management; wireless network implementation; maintenance; and many other services. Its extensive client base includes organisations in the utilities, field service, transport and logistics, healthcare, government and manufacturing sectors.

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