Spirit provides an authentic mobile enterprise solution for TAFC

Companies throughout the UK depend on a mobile enterprise solution for their supply chain computing and data capture needs. This solution can be quite complex, consisting not only of handheld devices but also a complete wireless infrastructure. That's why, when **The Authentic Food Company** acquired a site in Ireland and needed to replace the existing network, it called upon Spirit Data Capture. Spirit specialises in all aspects of a mobile enterprise solution – from the infrastructure through to the handheld devices.

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The Authentic Food Company (TAFC) is a family business that manufactures frozen ready meals and snacks for foodservice and retail across the UK and Europe. In 1985, a young housewife, Kamal Basran, became very frustrated at the lack of high quality Indian food when she was eating out. She launched Authentic Indian Foods, the forerunner of The Authentic Food Company.

The company is based in Manchester but operates from three sites. These include its most recent acquisition – a state-of-the-art frozen ready meals facility in Dundalk, Ireland, that was previously owned by Heinz. In Manchester, the company has a sophisticated mobile enterprise solution for data collection and analysis, using Motorola MC9090 and MC9190 handheld mobile computers. To provide the same high levels of service in Dundalk, TAFC wanted to install a similar system in Ireland. This meant the removal of the old Heinz equipment and network and the installation of TAFC's own handheld infrastructure and devices.

Raz Barkatali, TAFC's IT Manager, is responsible for all of the company's IT infrastructure, across all three sites. He explains: "The handheld devices that Heinz had been using in Ireland weren't compatible with the solution we support and use in the UK. For the past five years, we've been using Spirit Data Capture Limited in the UK to provide our mobile enterprise needs. Spirit was therefore the obvious choice to help with rolling out the same solution to replace the existing installation in Dundalk."

Developing the new solution

Spirit subsequently sourced and implemented the WiFi network, RF equipment, Motorola MC9190s and fork-lift truck installations. The MC9190 is a rugged, gun-style mobile computer which has 802.11a/b/g wireless as standard. It's ideal for data capture in harsh working environments and incorporates the latest barcode scanning technology. It also offers a choice of six interchangeable keypads.

The Motorola devices are used in the Dundalk site's warehouse factory areas and they are all connected to the network via Cisco access points. Spirit helped with the installation, configuration, training and support of the mobile computers, including a swap over of software for the devices.

In Dundalk, the new MC9190s are using Soti's MobiControl software, the leading mobile device management solution developed by SOTI. MobiControl is already used by TAFC's Manchester headquarters to ensure the optimum performance of its Motorola mobile computers. This minimises any downtime whilst also maximising reliability and productivity."

Raz Barkatali continues: "The new WiFi network and the Motorola devices have been performing perfectly so far and give us full traceability for all of our products. They help our warehouse and factory staff to carry out their tasks quickly and efficiently. The full keyboard has been a great help to them and they find the MC9190s very easy to use: they are always connected and available."

He adds: "The fact that these devices are supported from the UK has been a great advantage for my team and I. Spirit's engineer, who was on site to assist with the installation process, went above and beyond anything I expected from him. Whenever there was an issue, he would already have a contingency in place – and he also resolved some issues that weren't even directly related to Spirit's products."

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