

Citizen provides wireless mobile printing solution for leading pet-foods retailer



The latest label printing technology from Citizen Systems Europe, the leading manufacturer of dot matrix, label and barcode printers, has enabled Fressnapf Tiernahrungs GmbH, Europe's leading pet food and supplies retailer, to realise a series of wirelessly connected mobile workstations, which are offering considerable improvements to the company's operational processes.

Fressnapf is based in Krefeld, Germany, and employs 4600 employees across approximately 860 markets. The company's success is a result of it offering a wide range of products at low prices, making it crucial that its internal operations are carried out as efficiently and cost-effectively as possible. For this reason, a challenging project was recently undertaken aimed at optimising logistical processes at Fressnapf's headquarters.

One aspect of the far-reaching initiative incorporated the introduction of a voucher-less system of receiving goods. Michael Klaffke, Project Manager of Logistics at Fressnapf, commented, "In the past, products



were monitored directly at the gate by comparing the contents of a shipment with the delivery note. Then, another employee responsible for actually posting the incoming goods had to pick up the list, walk over to a stationary terminal, print out the appropriate labels, bring these over to where the products were and assign them to the respective pallets. Obviously, this approach was quite time-consuming and called for long transit times; therefore, we were interested in optimising the process.”

Fressnapf began looking into setting up a mobile workplace equipped with a printer, in order to be able to immediately produce and apply the warehouse labels for each pallet directly when the arriving goods were recorded. The solution was developed together with IT service provider Norlan, the company that had already installed the wireless local area network in the warehouse for Fressnapf. In addition to wireless LAN-compatible terminals, barcode scanners and internal power supplies, an essential part of the mobile workplaces were the CLP521 label printers from Citizen, which feature wireless LAN compatibility and are able to use direct thermal printing to produce adhesive 105mm wide labels.

Michael Klaffke commented, “We decided to follow our IT service provider’s recommendation completely, when they proposed that we go with the CLP521 from Citizen. Due to the fact that this printer met all of our requirements, we didn’t need to test any other products. Based on our daily experience, we can already say that these printers have really convinced us in terms of both the printing quality and their durability.”

Fressnapf is now putting eight Citizen printers to use in Krefeld in the area of incoming goods; six of which are part of the mobile work stations. The employees drive through the incoming order aisles with their stations and record the products to both their right and left, using either a scanner or by making manual entries using a touch screen.

Inspection of the incoming goods takes place immediately afterwards; here, Fressnapf checks whether the contents of



the package are correct and examines how many packages are on a tier and how many tiers are on each pallet. Integrating the mobile workplaces into the existing wireless LAN proved to be easy, with a client application running on the terminals that can immediately access the company's AS/400 via the wireless LAN.

Jörg Böttcher, Head of Organisation and Process Management at Fressnapf, is very happy with the new solution, "We now have integrated monitoring of incoming goods, in other words, inspections based on the contents of the delivery note, with a means of ensuring that the right contents are on the pallets. Furthermore, the printers are easy to use and, thanks to direct thermal printing, easy paper loading; the printer takes care of everything else automatically. These features have enabled our employees to get along with the system extremely well.

"Although we are still in the test phase, we have already observed that the major advantage that this solution offers is that we are able to perform wireless printing and move freely inside the warehouse with our mobile workplace and printer. An employee can put the printer to use anywhere without difficulty and print labels extremely quickly; less than two seconds after posting the order. For us, being able to work directly next to the product and then print out the label is already a major contributing factor to being able to achieve our objective of reducing process-related costs.

"Without the wireless LAN-compatible Citizen printers providing a mobile solution, we would never have been able to optimise these processes. The project has been so successful, we are already thinking about developing a mobile system for printing address labels in picking as well. Having heard that the CLP521 is also available in a low-voltage version, this printer will certainly make it onto our short list."

Citizen Systems Europe GmbH

www.citizen-europe.com/de

Mettinger Straße 11, D-73728 Esslingen
Deutschland
Telefon +49 711 3906 420
Fax +49 711 3906 405

Park House, 643 - 651 Staines Road,
Feltham. TW14 8PA. United Kingdom
Telefon +44 20 8893 1900
Fax +44 20 8893 0080

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Micro HumanTech