

Mobile computers: one for all

Emons Spedition replaced around 1,500 mobile computers for warehouse and driving personnel, along with the relevant telematics software, within the space of only four months. Honeywell's CT60 XPI, a standard device covering both areas, is being used for the first time. TIS GmbH is the supplier of the devices.



Collect, transship, deliver: General cargo is a logistic challenge and necessitates very efficient processes. The rising costs of personnel and vehicle fleets need to be frequently offset by savings made in handling. With this in mind, Emons Spedition regularly invests in its IT infrastructure to take the pressure off its workforce and accelerate handling.

The 1,500 mobile scanners, which are generally replaced at Emons every four to five years, play an important role in this context for driving and warehouse personnel. The next replacement was scheduled for 2020, and Emons began to search for suitable successor candidates. The drivers and warehouse staff were consulted in the process: A test phase was run with a view to assessing the ergonomics, the display and scan capabilities of various models.

Scanning without zoom and moving parts

At the end of the process, the decision was fell on Honeywell's CT60 XP mobile computers with a battery runtime of a minimum of 12 hours and an innovative FlexRange imager. FlexRange stands for the quick capturing of bar codes within a close, medium and long range, and is based on two-lens technology, with each lens covering its own range. The solution can therefore dispense with zoom and movable parts, which ultimately makes the devices more robust. The 4.7 inch touch display in HD resolution, allowing more room for information than predecessor versions as there are no keys, was compelling. With a brightness of up to 500 nits, they are also easy to read in bright light outside. Finally, the large batteries ensure that the devices do not need charging cradles in the trucks.

TIS GmbH, a company specialised in mobile telematics solutions, is the supplier of the hardware. With the TISLOG app, the company has also developed software specially for the devices. With its live configurator, the app has the advantage of

being easily adaptable to individual requirements and can take the driver through the whole process step-by-step. TIS delivered the 1,500 configured devices to 24 Emons locations within a space of only four months. The 200 scanners destined for inventory turnover were also equipped with a pistol grip specially developed by TIS. The hardware project was duly completed in April 2021.

Significantly reduced workload

"Recording bar codes from near and far with a device helps us to save time and money every time we scan," says Gunnar Stellmacher who is responsible for IT at Emons. The scanning range of the compact CT60 XP covers a range of a few centimetres up to a distance of three metres. Scanning in the building in the context of stock rotation can now be completely carried out by the forklift drivers. This task formerly required the support of "non-motorised" colleagues. In any case, each scan saves on additional steps and strenuous stretching or bending to get at the bar codes of articles stacked lower down or higher up.

Thanks to the innovative scan engine, the CT60 XP in smart phone format is suitable not only for stock rotation, but also for the driver on the last mile. "We were therefore able to find one single device for all areas, which greatly simplifies management and maintenance, also with the issue of accessories," emphasises Stellmacher, who also exchanged the telematics software on the devices in the procurement process.

Parallel operation enabled

The background to this measure is switching the operating system: Whereas the predecessor devices that also came from Honeywell were still controlled with Windows Mobile, the CT60 XP works with Android. Honeywell guarantees updates for Android 12 at minimum, which ensures a long-term investment. TIS developed the TISLOG Mobile Enterprise solution for the Google system, which now replaces the earlier PSP3 version. As part of the four-month phase of switching, Emons was able to keep both software generations operating in parallel.

The TISLOG MDM for "Mobile Device Management", newly introduced at Emons, also assisted in the process. It enables an efficient and centralised management of all mobile telematics devices and is an integral part of the TISLOG software family. The solution which is easy to use enables the quick and centrally controlled transfer of software updates, as well as data backups and keeping an inventory of all mobile devices. Other functions include the registering and setting up of new devices or the retiring devices and the associated deleting of corporate data.

Drivers adjust routes

Another software innovation consists of now being able to calculate ETAs (estimated time of arrival) which play an increasingly important role in the general cargo business. Calculating ETAs presupposes that "the routes are driven precisely as saved in dispatch operations," explains warehouse manager Jürgen Gräf. In daily practice, however, drivers frequently change the sequence of the route as they have better knowledge of the local conditions. "The TISLOG app enables drivers to make and save these changes in the telematics system in a few quick steps," Gräf says. Based on the actual route data, TISLOG calculates realistic ETAs that are sent directly via interface to the Euro-Mistral transport management system used at Emons.

Conclusion: Renewing the telematics software and the mobile computers for the warehouse and driving personnel has raised productivity further and improved the quality in general cargo transport at Emons Spedition. This is borne out by scanning processes that save time and effort, standardising the devices selected and generating realistic ETAs.

Profile: Emons

Based in Cologne, Emons is a mid-sized independent family-owned company. Founded in 1928, the logistics service provider transported around 4.8 million consignments in 2020 and achieved revenues of around €555 million. More than 3,000 employees work in around 100 locations spread across the globe to deliver forwarding services as a one-stop solution. The broad portfolio includes break-bulk cargo, partial and full load freight services, CEP services, air and sea freight, rail freight transport and container trucking. Another major business segment consists of is Emons Forwarding & Logistics with 250,000 square metres of roofed warehouse space at 35 locations.

Delivery to the addressees is largely carried out by subcontractors. More than 900 drivers are on the road every day for Emons. The company's own vehicle fleet consists of more than 310 trucks, 1,000 swap bodies and 160 trailers. In addition, a fixed contingent of around 1,000 trucks from subcontractors are on the roads day in day out for Emons. More information can be found at www.emons.de.

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