

PRINT IT! SORT IT! TRACK IT!

Automated Parcel Tracking System Incorporates Portable Printer

A large European shipping company operates a classic hub with central sortation and routing at the Company's Headquarters and at local depots throughout the United Kingdom. This company currently sorts around 19 million parcels per annum - 90,000 to 110,000 parcels per working day - at the hub, which are then routed to the correct local depot for further sortation and then finally delivery.

Cognitive provided a solution to a challenging bar code label printing requirement in the local depots due to an increase in volume of the number of parcels they were having to sort. A new dispatch note was to be implemented with their customers who apply the pre-printed labels at their offices as part of the parcel management system. This new document incorporates miniature bar code labels, each containing a consignment note number and a unique identification number which allows parcels to be identified at all times easily and quickly. When the parcels are received by the local depots, labels are scanned and data from the despatch note is entered onto the depots network and subsequently the hub's tracking system. The final requirement for automated parcel processing was for the local depot to apply an enlarged label with an interleaved 2 of 5 bar code, which was printed using the Cognitive Code Courier portable printer. This would enable automatic sorting using overhead scanning on the hub's Vanderlande® conveyor routing system, which is a complex system of 12 in-feeds, a main line and a multiple of feed chutes. These high speed scanners read the bar codes which sort the parcels and ensure they are assigned to the right out-feed chute which is designated for a particular area of the country.

This system also updates the hub's database at the same time so informing that the parcels have been sorted. Once sorted the parcels are loaded on the vans to be delivered.

PRINTER REQUIREMENTS

The printer required by the depot system had to be both powerful and portable, connecting directly to portable terminal which is used to enter details on incoming parcels.

The selection trials on available printers focused on small size, low weight, ease of media loading, print speed and print quality. The Code Courier from Cognitive is one of the smallest, lightest and fastest 4" printers available. The Code Courier packs desk top features into a package weighing little more than 1kg. These features include a 32 bit microprocessor, 8 dot per mm print head, 63mm/sec print speed, high lift print head, 2-D bar code facilities and a variety of installed fonts. Combine the above with a robust construction and a full suit of accessories and it is easy to see why the Cognitive Code Courier printer was selected. The system, including the Cognitive Code Courier printers, has now been in service for over one year and is reputed to have contributed significantly to the improved efficiency of depots by reducing data entry errors, speeding up handling and hence increasing throughput. It is said that the parcel sorting system is one of the most advanced in Europe. Users of the mobile RF terminal and printer package have commented with enthusiasm that the freedom provided by this on-line portable system has improved their effectiveness. The key to this efficient system is its ability to read bar codes on parcels quickly and accurately which enables this shipper to give a highly reliable service to their customers.

